CTH 233
PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA

COURSE GUIDE

CTH 233
PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

Course Developer/Writer — Mr. Sunday Ola-Oluwa Adenrele
Divine Theological Seminary
Lagos

Course Editor — Dr. A. O. Dairo
Olabisi Onabanjo University
Ago-Iwoye

Programme Leader — Dr. Olubiyi Adeniyi Adewale
National Open University of Nigeria

Course Coordinator — Dr. Jacob A. Owolabi
National Open University of Nigeria

NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA

National Open University of Nigeria
Headquarters
14/16 Ahmadu Bello Way
Victoria Island
Lagos

Abuja Office
5, Dar es Salaam Street
Off Aminu Kano Crescent
Wuse II, Abuja
Nigeria

e-mail: centralinfo@nou.edu.ng
URL: www.nou.edu.ng

Published by
National Open University of Nigeria

Printed 2008

ISBN: 978-058-462-5

CONTENTS **PAGE**

Introduction

The title of this course may possibly appear intriguing to a beginner, but a careful study of the course will reveal that it covers the most valued and interesting aspects of human existence. This course is a 2 unit course for undergraduate students offering Christian Theology.

This course consists of 15 units and it examines a philosophical study of themes in religion. This will include concepts like God, immortality, creation of the world, theistic theories, atheistic theories and the problem of theodicy.

There are no compulsory prerequisites for this course. The Course Guide tells you briefly what the course is about, what you are expected to know in each unit, what course materials you will be using and how you can work your way through these materials. It also emphasizes the need for Tutor- Marked Assignments (TMAs). Detailed information on TMAs is found in the separate file, which will be sent to you later. There are periodic tutorial classes that are linked to the course.

What You Will Learn in this Course

The overall aim of CTH 233: Philosophy of Religion is to lead you to the study of the use of philosophy in addressing the basic themes of Christianity, with particular emphasis on God, humanity, evil, creation and science and religion.

Your understanding of this course will help you to be able to address most of the attacks against religion and counter arguments raised in answer to these objections. As you study this course, you will find the subject very illuminating as you will benefit from insights of other biblical theologians and Christian philosophers.

Course Aims

The course is aimed at examining the main questions raised against religious themes from philosophical background. Rather than arise in arms against such objections, the course is aimed at carefully understanding them and their history. This course will also explain the various arguments of God's existence. And finally examine the problem of evil. This will be achieved by aiming to:

- Introduce you to the meaning, history and methodology of philosophy
- Assist you to describe the tools of philosophy

- Expose you to the various definitions and theories of the origin of religion in human societies.
- Expose you to the philosophical and the scientific theories of creation in relation to the ones found in religion.
- Lead you to the study of the existence, nature, manifestations and attributes of God as found in the Bible and other religious scriptures.
- Highlight the various theistic theories
- Explain the various atheistic theories
- Guide you to the study of theodicy

Course Objectives

To achieve the above aims, CTH 233, is designed unit by unit with the intent of addressing them. Read these objectives carefully and always note them as you progress. The wider objectives of the course as a whole are stated below. This will guide you in your studies. On successful completion of the course, you should be able to:

- Define philosophy
- Define religion
- List the main questions raised by philosophers against religion
- Explain some theories about the existence of God.
- List some of the proponents of such theories.
- Discuss some theologians' response to these theories.
- Explain the problem of evil.
- Propound your own theory in an attempt to solve the problems

Working through this Course

In order to pass this course with ease, it is important to study the study units along with other related materials. You will also need to answer all the exercise questions. The exercise questions are to assist you in understanding the concepts and themes in the units better. This also prepares you for the final examination.

Course Materials

1) Course Guide
2) Study Units
3) Assignment file
4) Relevant textbooks including the ones listed in the references.
5) An open mind.

Study Units

There are 15 units (of three modules) in this course. They are listed below:

Module 1 The meaning of Philosophy of Religion

Unit1 Meaning and Scope of Philosophy
Unit 2 Meaning and Theories of Religion
Unit 3 Philosophy of Religion
Unit 4 Origin of the World
Unit 5 Origin of Theodicy

Module 2 Theism

Unit 1 Meaning and Origin of Theism
Unit 2 Theistic Arguments
Unit 3 Meaning and Origin of Atheism
Unit 4 Atheistic Theories
Unit 5 Religion and Science

Module 3 Religion and Contemporary Issues

Unit 1 The Problem of Evil
Unit 2 Life after Death
Unit 3 The Quest for Historical Jesus
Unit 4 Limitations to Science
Unit 5 Religion and Social Change

Textbooks and References

Certain books have been recommended in the course. You may wish to purchase them for further reading.

Tertullian, (1967). *Prescription against Heretics*, VII, quoted in Stevenson (ed.), London, SPCK

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Online Internet Resource. Copyright © 1996, 2002. Graham. Oppy@arts.monash.edu.au

Oshitelu G.A. (2002). *A Background to Christian Philosophy*. Ibadan: Oputoru Books.

Omoregbe J. I. (1993). *A Philosophical look at Religion*. Lagos: J.E.R.P.

Iroegbu P.O. (2002). *Kpim of Theodicy*, (Proving the existence of God via Hermeholiontica). Ibadan: Hope Publications.

Alston, W. (1969). "The Ontological Argument Revisited" *Philosophical Review*. p. 452-474.

Assessment File

An Assessment File and the Marking Scheme will be made available to you. In the Assessment File, you will find details of the work that must be submitted to your tutor for marking. There are two aspects to the assessment of this course, the tutor-marked and the written examination. The marks you obtain in these two areas will make up your marks. The assignment must be submitted to your tutor for formal assessment in accordance with the deadline stated in the presentation schedule and the assignment file. The work you submit to your tutor will count for 30% of your total score.

Tutor-Marked Assignment

You will have to submit a specific number of the (TMAs). Every unit in this course has a tutor-marked assignment.

Final Examination and Grading

The examination will consist of questions which reflect the type of self-testing, practice exercises and tutor-marked problems you have come across. All areas of the course will be assessed.

You are advised to revise the entire course after studying the last unit before you sit for the examination. You will find it useful to review your tutor-marked assignments and the comments of your tutor on them before the final examination.

Presentation Schedule

The dates for submission of all assignments will be communicated to you. You will also be told the date of completing the study units and dates for examinations.

Course Marking Scheme

The following table lays out how the actual course mark allocation is broken down.

Assessment	**Marks**
Assignment (Best Three Assignment out of Four marked)	= 30%
Final Examination	= 70%
Total	**100%**

Course Overview

Unit	**Title of Work**	**Weeks Activity**	
	Course Guide		
	Module 1: Meaning & Scope of Philosophy of Religion		
1	The Meaning of Philosophy	Week 1	Assignment 1
2	Meaning & Theories of Religion	Week 2	Assignment 2
3	Philosophy of Religion	Week 3	Assignment 3
4	Origin of the World	Week 4	Assignment 4
5	Origin of Theodicy	Week 5	Assignment 5
	Module 2: Theism		
1	Meaning and Origin of Theism	Week 6	Assignment 1
2	Theistic Theories	Week 7	Assignment 2
3	Meaning and Origin of Atheism	Week 8	Assignment 3
4	Atheistic Theories	Week 9	Assignment 4
5	Religion and science	Week 10	Assignment 5
	Module 3: The Problem of Evil		
1	Origin of Evil	Week 11	Assignment 1
2	Evil in various Religions	Week 12	Assignment 2
3	Anthropodicy	Week 13	Assignment 3
4	Miracles and Prayer	Week 14	Assignment 4
5	The World of the Spirits	Week 15	Assignment 5

How to Get the Best from this Course

In distance learning the study units replace the university lecturer. This is one of the great advantages of distance learning. You can read and work through specially designed study materials at your own pace, and at a time and place that suit you best. Think of it as reading the lecture instead of listening to a lecturer. In the same way that a lecturer might set you some reading to do, the study units tell you when to read your set books or other material. Just as a lecturer might give you an in-class exercise, your units provide exercises for you to do at appropriate points.

Each of the study units follows a common format. The first item is an introduction to the subject matter of the unit and how a particular unit is integrated with the other units and the course as a whole. Next is a set of learning objectives. These objectives enable you know what you should be able to do by the time you have completed the unit. You should use these objectives to guide your study. When you have finished the units you must go back and check whether you have achieved the objectives. If you make a habit of doing this you will significantly improve your chances of passing the course.

The main body of the unit guides you through the required reading from other sources. This will usually be either from your set books or from a reading section.

Remember that your tutor's job is to assist you. When you need help, don't hesitate to called and ask your tutor to provide it.

1. Read this Course Guide thoroughly.

2. Organize a study schedule; refer to the 'course overview' for more details.

   Note the time you are expected to spend on each unit and how the assignments relate to the units. Whatever method you chose to use, you should decide on it and write in you own dates for working on each unit.

3. Once you have created your own study schedule, do everything you can to stick to it. The major reason that students fail is that they lag behind in their course work.

4. Turn to unit1 and read the introduction and the objectives for the unit.

5. Assemble the study materials. Information about what you need for a unit is given in the 'overview' at the beginning of each unit. You will almost always need both the study unit you are working on and one of your set books on your desk at the same time.

6. Work through the unit. The content of the unit itself has been arranged to provide a sequence for you to follow. As you work through the unit you will be instructed to read sections from your set books or other articles. Use the unit to guide your reading.

7. Review the objectives for each study unit to confirm that you have achieved them. If you feel unsure about any of the objectives, review the study material or consult your tutor.

8. When you are confident that you have achieved a unit's objectives, you can start on the next unit. Proceed unit by unit through the course and try to pace your study so that you keep yourself on schedule.

9. When you have submitted an assignment to your tutor for marking, do not wait for its return before starting the next unit. Keep to your schedule, when the assignment is returned pay serious attention to your tutor's comments, both on the tutor-marked assignment form and also the written comments on the ordinary assignments.

10. After completing the last unit, review the course and prepare yourself for the final examination. Check that you have achieved the unit objectives (listed at the beginning of each unit) and the course objectives (listed in the Course Guide).

Facilitators/Tutors and Tutorials

Information relating to tutorials will be provided at the appropriate time. Your tutor will mark and comment on your assignments, keep a close watch on your progress and on any difficulties you might encounter and provide assistance to you during the course. You must take your tutor-marked assignment to your study centres well before the due dates (at least 2 working days are required). They will be marked by your tutor and return to you as soon as possible.

Do not hesitate to contact your tutor if you need help. Contact your tutor if:

- You do not understand any part of the study units or the assigned readings.
- You have difficulty with the exercises.
- You have a question or problem with an assignment or with your tutor's comments on an assignment or with the grading of an assignment.

You should do your best to attend the tutorials. This is the only chance to have face-to-face contact with your tutor and ask questions which are answered instantly. You can raise any problem encountered in the course of your study. To gain the maximum benefit from course tutorials, prepare a question list before attending them. You will learn a lot from participating in discussion actively.

Summary

The Course Guide gives you an overview of what to expect in the course of this study. The course teaches you the basic principles of philosophy of religion and how these principles can be applied in addressing the myriad social problems being faced in our society.

We wish you success with the course and hope that you will find it both interesting and useful.

MAIN COURSE

Course Code	CTH 233
Course Title	Philosophy of Religion
Course Developer/Writer	Mr. Sunday Ola-Oluwa Adenrele Divine Theological Seminary Lagos
Course Editor	Dr. A. O. Dairo Olabisi Onabanjo University Ago-Iwoye
Programme Leader	Dr. Olubiyi Adeniyi Adewale National Open University of Nigeria
Course Coordinator	Dr. Jacob A. Owolabi National Open University of Nigeria

NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA

National Open University of Nigeria
Headquarters
14/16 Ahmadu Bello Way
Victoria Island
Lagos

Abuja Office
5, Dar es Salaam Street
Off Aminu Kano Crescent
Wuse II, Abuja
Nigeria

e-mail: centralinfo@nou.edu.ng
URL: www.nou.edu.ng

Published by
National Open University of Nigeria

Printed 2008

ISBN: 978-058-462-5

CONTENTS PAGE

MODULE 1 THE MEANING OF PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

UNIT 1 MEANING AND SCOPE OF PHILOSOPHY

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Through the ages, philosophy has been ascribed as the mother of all disciplines. This is because the earliest forms of inquiry into things concerning every facet of human existence were first carried out by philosophers. The ancient Socratic dictum ‘man know thyself,’ specifically points to the fact of not only self-examination but a critical inquiry into the world around us. Hence, philosophy helps us to be conscious not only of ourselves (our thoughts, allegiances, prejudices, presuppositions and assumptions) but also of events in and around us. You are welcome to the study of the mother of all academic disciplines. You will find this unit of great interest as you will be introduced to the etymology, definitions, branches and the various approaches to the study of Philosophy.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- define philosophy from etymology
- mention some definitions of philosophy
- discuss the main branches of philosophy
- explain the different branches of philosophy
- list the different tools of philosophy
- describe the various approaches to philosophy
- state the tasks of philosophy
- describe the various applications of philosophy.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Etymology of Philosophy

Philosophy is derived etymologically from two Greek words '*phileo'* and '*sophia'*, meaning "the love of knowledge", "the love of wisdom". Hence, for anyone to be called a philosopher, he must be a lover of knowledge and wisdom.

3.2 Definitions of Philosophy

Various attempts made by scholars to define philosophy has always been inadequate, not because of the deficiency of the proponents of the theories, but because such propounded theories have always not been all-encompassing in its definition of philosophy

.

James Richmond defines philosophy as an inquiry into reality as a whole. But this definition has been faulted on the basis that philosophy goes beyond the realm of perceived realities alone. Fredrich Ferre defines philosophy as one's way of thinking most comprehensively. However, the distinction between philosophy and other disciplines is not so much its comprehensiveness as its critical nature. Omoregbe (1993; 2) defines philosophy as a rational inquiry into the nature and meaning of reality. It is a search for the nature and meaning of things. The philosopher seeks to know, understand the nature, meaning and purpose of things. Oshitelu (2002; 1) believes that philosophy implies primarily reflection upon simple, crude experience which it presupposes. It is a critical and systematization of all knowledge drawn from empirical, rational learning, and common experience.

But for our purpose, a working definition of philosophy for this course is the critical study of the most general and abstract features of the universe, and categories with which we embark on such enquiry. In an

attempt to put forward a definition of philosophy, we must bear in mind the following:

1. Philosophy is a free rational inquiry into the meaning and nature of reality
2. There is need for coherent and consistent reasoning to clarify human beliefs and practices.
3. Philosophical concern is universal and not individualistic.
4. Philosophy is also carried out within a particular social context.

3.3 History of Philosophy

Ancient Philosophy can be traced from the Graeco-Roman world of the fifth century B.C to the fourth century A.D. It is usually divided into four periods, the Socratic period, the periods of Plato and Aristotle and the post – Aristotelian period (or Hellenistic period). Sometimes a fifth period is added that includes the Christian and Neo-Platonist philosophers of all these periods. The role of the ancient Greek philosophers deserves great attention.

3.3.1 Greek Philosophy

Greek philosophy is often divided into two periods, namely: the pre-Socratic period and the Socratic and post-Socratic period. Among the great pre-Socratic Philosophers were Thales, (640-528 B.C), Anaxogoras (c. 500-428 B.C), Zeno of Elea (c. 478 B.C). The Socratic period includes: Socrates (469-399 B.C), Democritus (c. 460-360) Plato (427-347 B.C), Aristotle (384-322 B.C), the post Aristotelian schools of the Stoics and the Epicureans, Plotinus (205-270AD) and the Neo-Platonists.

The prevailing socio-cultural atmosphere of the Greek islands at this period has been assumed to be responsible for the unique way of reasoning which gave birth to philosophy amongst the Greeks. They were probably the first to query and question life and indeed the universe in general. In an attempt to proffer answers to many question raised, they began to speculate, which later gave rise to great minds like Socrates (469-399 B.C), Plato (427-347 B.C) and Aristotle (384-322 B.C).

Socrates (469 – 399 B.C.)

Socrates could be termed as the great father of philosophy with his concentration on ethical and epistemological problems. His interests were especially in moral problems. He believed that the surest way of settling questions was to define the meaning in the terms involved.

Hence, words like good, virtue, right, wrong, were of great interest to him. Socrates could not be traced to any writing, but Plato his pupil made his great mind known to the world through his "*Dialogue*". Socrates was sentenced to death by being made to drink poison (hemlock) in 347 B.C.

Plato (427 – 347 B.C)

Plato was an avowed admirer of Socrates. He was born in Athens to a wealthy family. At the age of twenty, he came in contact with Socrates, who spent his life in discussions with the youth of Athens. He faithfully followed Socrates until 399 B.C when Socrates was tried for impiety-a charge that he was corrupting the youth with his teaching.

After the death of Socrates, Plato left Athens and travelled until 357 B.C. When he returned, he founded a school known as the Academy, where he was a leader for forty years. Plato like his brilliant pupil, Aristotle, was one of the most influential thinkers and writers in the history of western society.

Aristotle (384 – 322 B.C)

Aristotle was born in Stagira in Northern Greece. He went to Athens to study as a young man. At the age of eighteen he joined the Academy founded by Plato. He remained there for nearly twenty years until the death of Plato. After a period of scientific activity in Asia Minor, he was for four years, the tutor of Macedonian Crown Prince, the future Alexander the Great. About 334 B.C, Aristotle returned to Athens and founded his own school, the Lyceum in Athens, called the *"Peripatetic"* school to which he devoted the rest of his life.

The trio of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle actually gave wing to what is today known as philosophy and many other disciplines. Hence, a history of philosophy will not be complete without a mention of these great men.

3.4 Branches of Philosophy

It will be difficult to give an exclusive list of the main branches of philosophy, because there have been different, equally acceptable divisions at different times, and the divisions are often relative to the concerns of a particular period and preference of the scholar. However, the following branches are usually accepted as the main ones.

Metaphysics

This investigates the nature of being and the world. It is of immense importance to this course because the area of philosophy of religion borders heavily on it. Its traditional branches are Cosmology and Ontology.

Epistemology

Epistemology is concerned with the nature and scope of knowledge, and whether knowledge is possible at all. Among its central concerns has been the challenge posed by scepticism and the relationship between truth, belief and justification.

Ethics

Ethics or "Moral Philosophy" is concerned with questions of how persons ought to act or if such questions are answerable. This formed the basis of Socratic philosophy. Plato's early dialogues include a search for definitions of virtue. Meta-ethics compares and contrasts various systems of ethics and investigates what ethics is. Ethics is also associated with ideas of morality.

Logic

This area of philosophy deals with patterns of thinking that lead from true premises to true conclusions. Beginning in the late 19th Century, mathematicians such as Frege began a mathematical treatment of Logic, and today the subject of logic has two broad divisions. Mathematical logic (formal symbolic logic) and what is now called philosophical logic.

Aesthetics

Aesthetics deals with beauty, art, enjoyment, sensory-emotional values like love, perception and matters of taste and sentiment.

Political Philosophy

This is the study of government and the relationship of individuals and communities to the state. It includes questions about law, property and the rights and obligations of the citizens. A popular political philosophy is that of Nicollo Machiavelli.

Philosophy of the Mind

The relationship of the mind to the body and the nature of the mind has always been a thing of dispute amongst philosophers. This has typified disputes between dualism and materialism. In recent years there is an increasing connection between this branch of philosophy and cognitive science. To the religiously-minded, the essence of the soul and its source has always made this branch of philosophy be of interest to religion.

Generally, most academic subjects have a philosophy; for example, the philosophy of science, the philosophy of mathematics, and the philosophy of history. In addition, a range of academic subjects have emerged to deal with areas which would have historically been the subject of philosophy. These include psychology, anthropology and science.

3.5 The Branches of Philosophy

Greek Philosophy

Scholars of old used the word "Greek" to indicate the origin of the art of philosophy. This can also be used interchangeably with Ancient Philosophy.

Western Philosophy

These have been broadly woven to include the philosophies of Europe, North Africa and even the Middle East, because of their strong interactions with Europe, and are usually considered part of western philosophy. In the same vein Western Philosophy can also been sub-divided into the following:

Ancient Philosophy

Ancient Philosophy is the philosophy of the Greco-Roman world from the fifth century B.C to the fourth century A.D. It is usually divided into four periods: the Pre-Socratic period; the periods of Plato and Aristotle, and the Post-Aristotelian period (or Hellenistic period). Sometimes, a fifth period is added that include the Christian and the Neo-Platonist philosophers. The most important of the ancient philosophers (in terms of subsequent influence) are Plato and Aristotle.

Medieval Philosophy	-	The middle Ages
Early Modern	-	(c. 1600- c. 1800)
Later Modern	-	(c. 1800- c. 1900)
Contemporary	-	(c. 1900 – present)

Eastern Philosophy

This deal basically with the following: Babylonian philosophy; Chinese philosophy; Indian philosophy and Persian philosophy

African Philosophy

This deals with the thought system of Africans, both ancient and contemporary. Often this is viewed along with the cultural and religious beliefs of Africans.

3.6 Various Approaches to Philosophy

Philosophy actually started out with the need to explicate, disambiguate and clarify issues. (Oshitelu 2002; 1). The mind needs to examine the realities critically, in order to determine their relevance or otherwise. This activity is known as critical philosophy or logical analysis. According to A.S Hook this activity of philosophy enables the professional to distinguish not only between statements of facts and hypothesis, which may be true or false, but also to cut through linguistic sloganeering through a thorough analysis of concepts.

In an attempt to achieve this, philosophers have embarked on varied form of technique of philosophizing which ultimately affected the outcome of their thoughts. Listed below are some of these approaches.

- Realism and Nominalism
- Rationalism and Empiricism.
- Skepticism
- Idealism
- Pragramatism
- Phenomenology
- Existentialism
- Structuralism and Post Structuralism
- The analytic tradition.
- Ethics and Political Philosophy. (Human Nature and political legitimacy) Consequentialism, deontology and like aretaic turn.

3.7 Applied Philosophy

Omoregbe (1993:2) states that philosophy is the oldest academic discipline, which is why it is referred to as “the mother of all sciences”. The earliest philosophers were the earliest scientists, the earliest geographers, the earliest mathematicians, and the earliest political

scientists. Although, the other disciplines, having evolved from philosophy care now on their own, they still maintain a link with their mother-discipline. Each of them still retains a philosophical dimension, and their study would be incomplete without this philosophical dimension. Hence, we have the philosophy of science, the philosophy of law, the philosophy of the social science, the philosophy of education, the philosophy of medicine, the philosophy of history, the philosophy of language, the philosophy of religion among others. All these are nothing but applied philosophies.

4.0 CONCLUSION

We have embarked on the introductory aspect of the interesting discipline of philosophy. We have explained philosophy that philosophy involves the critical use of reason in proffering answers to the mind of questions besetting human existence in the universe.

5.0 SUMMARY

The introductory aspects of philosophy through the etymology, definition, history, branches and the various approaches to the art of reasoning is what we have been able to successfully examine in this unit. This will enable you as a student of philosophy, to adequately comprehend the very essence of the subject matter.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. What is Philosophy?
2. What is the major concern of philosophers?
3. State four tools of philosophy and explain 2 of them.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Tertullian, (1967). *Prescription against Heretics*, VII, quoted in Stevenson (ed.) London: SPCK.

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Online Internet Resource. 2002.Graham available at Oppy@arts.monash.edu.au

Oshitelu G. A. (2002). *A Background to Christian Philosophy*, Ibadan: Oputoru Books.

Omoregbe J. I. (1993). *A philosophical look at Religion*: Lagos, J.E.R.P p. 13.

Iroegbu P.O. (2002). *Kpim of Theodicy*, (Proving the existence of God via Hermeholiontica). Ibadan, Hope Publications. 2002. p. 7.

Alston, W. (1960). “The Ontological Argument Revisited” *Philosophical Review*. pp. 452-474.

UNIT 2 MEANING AND THEORY OF RELIGION

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This unit is intended to focus on the term 'religion.' It will deal with the etymology, definitions of religion, theories of religion and the functions of religion. All this will be examined in the light of the place of religion in human societies.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- trace the etymology of the word "religion"
- state one definition of religion
- explain the various theories of religion
- list the functions of religion
- describe the place of religion in human societies.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Etymology of Religion

The word 'religion' derives from three Latin words, namely. *"Ligare"*, (meaning to bind). *"Relegere"* (meaning to unite, or to link) and *"Religio"* (meaning relationship). From the root of the word 'religion', it can be inferred that it is essentially a relationship,

a link established between two persons, namely the human person and the divine person.

3.2 Definition of Religion

Like in philosophy, there is no universally accepted definition of religion. This is simply because religion means different things to different people. It may mean a thing to a philosopher and another to a theologian and another to a sociologist. Here are some definitions of religion put forward by scholars from different fields.

- Karl Max "religion is the opium of the masses".
- Feuerbach "religion is man's alienation; it is the means by which man strips himself of his own essence, his best qualities, and reduces himself to nothing".
- Salmon Reinach "religion is an assembly of scruples impeding the free exercise of our faculties".
- Schleiermacher "religion is a feeling of absolute dependence on God."
- C. A. Campbell "a state of mind comprising belief in the reality of a supernatural being"
- Williams James "the feeling, acts and the experience of individual men in their solitude".
- Emile Durkheim "religion is the creation of the society".

A. C. Bouquet defines religion as "a fixed relationship between the human self and some non–human entity, the sacred, the supernatural, the self – existent, the absolute or simply, God".

For our purpose, any definition of religion must have as its basis the following:

- The object of worship - God
- The need for revelation - medium/religion
- Apprehension of the revelation – man

The above definitions also attempt to embrace these important values. It is in line with this that we shall embark on the examination of the various theories about religion.

SELFASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Define the term 'religion'.

3.3 Anthropological Theory of Religion

Ludwig Andreas Feuerbach based his anthropological theories of religion on his discoveries about human nature. In his book, "*The essence of Christianity"*, he believes that religion is nothing other than the worship of human nature. When man thinks he is worshipping God he is only worshipping himself, that is, his own nature which he projects outside himself as God. To him, the God that the religious man worships is nothing other than the projected image of human nature. Man alienates himself of his best virtues-goodness, justice, power, wisdom, mercy etc, and projects them outside himself into an imaginary being, called God. But in order to successfully project these human qualities into the concept of God, man removes from them human limitations and therefore sees them as limitless – infinite goodness, infinite justice, infinite wisdom, etc. Thus, all the divine attributes are in fact human attributes removed from man and projected into the idea of God. God becomes everything that is good while man become nothing.

After reducing himself to nothing by stripping, man later come to realize that he has been worshipping himself and praying to himself, and that the divine essence is nothing but the idealized and projected essence of man. Having come to realize this fact, man overcomes his self-alienation. He comes to know himself better and then reconcile himself with himself, then, he will stop practicing religion the moment he discovers the true meaning of what he has been doing, therefore religion have a terminal date.

Our objection to this theory is that, if as Feuerbach says, man's knowledge is limited by his nature, he would not be able to even conceive the idealized collective human nature since that transcends his individual nature.

3.4 Sociological Theory of Religion

Emile Durkheim, in his book, *"The elementary forms of religions"* gives a sociological interpretation of religion, as a creation of the society. It is the society which created and uses religion as an instrument of control. It is, according to Durkheim (1965, orig. 1915), people that engage in religious life to celebrate the awesome power of their society. The society uses religion as the instrument of control and means of moulding their minds so that it may be able to direct their thinking. The society exercises such a powerful influence on its member that the latter personifies its force into divine entity. The almighty God is simply a symbol of the might of the society. What religious people also call the commandments of God is nothing other than the moral demands of the society.

The idea of mystery or transcendence in religion is explained by the fact that the members of the society do not quite understand the source of society's remote control and pervading influence over them. But if society is the ultimate source of the idea of God and of morality, how is it possible for some moral reformers to criticize the society, denounce it and go against its demands by appealing to a force beyond the society itself? Socrates and Jesus Christ did precisely that. They went beyond the demands of their societies and brought in new dimension to the life of the society. In doing this, they appealed to a force beyond the society, which shows that the society is not the ultimate source of religious and moral consciousness.

3.5 Psychological Theory of Religion

Sigmund Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis, gives a psychological explanation of religion in his books, *Totem and Taboo,* and F*uture of Illusion.* Religion, according to him is a continuation into adulthood a child's attitude towards his father. Realizing his weakness, a child naturally seeks the protection of his father whom he sees as very powerful, and able to protect him. He therefore frequently turns to his father for help and protection in times of difficulty. Religion is nothing other than this childhood mentally extended into adult hood. Faced with the odds of life – the forces of nature, death, disease, etc. man realizes his weakness and helplessness. Like a child he spontaneously seeks the protection of a father, and finding none he imagines one for himself. Thus, God according to Freud, is an imaginary being; an imaginary father.

It must be given to this theory that, the paternalism pervades the idea of God in most religions, and that most religious people turn to God mostly in times of need and difficulty. But the very essence of religion clearly surpasses the fearful longing of a child for his father's protection. This sense of lack of security cannot explain why many are willing to die for their faith or belief.

3.6Marxist Theory

Karl Marx attributed the origin and continuing existence of religion to the economic exploitation of the masses in the capitalist system. He agreed with Feuerbach that God is nothing other that the projection of the best qualities in man and that religion is man's self alienation. But he accused Feuerbach of indulging in metaphysical abstraction in his conception of the human essence.

Karl Marx tries to explain the driving force behind man's reclining into religion. The answer, according to Marx is simple; it is exploitation, the economic exploitation and oppression of the masses in the capitalist system. The masses who are suffering under the oppressive and exploitative capitalist system look up to the sky for an imaginary saviour who will come and deliver them from the hands of their capitalist exploiters. They then invent the idea of God to whom they pray and look forward to for deliverance. Thus, religion is the product of exploitation, oppression and suffering. It is the sign of the exploited; the cry of the oppressed in the capitalist system, this explains why religion is generally practiced by the poor, the oppressed, the suffering masses, for it is the cry of the oppressed creature in the heartless capitalist world. The rich exploiters encourage religion and use it as opium, a sedative, with which they calm down the exploited masses and prevent them from revolting against them.

3.7Theological Theory of Religion

The Italian theologian, P. Rosario, traces the origin of religion to human nature itself, which according to him has a religious dimension. The human spirit is constantly and continuously searching for its source, i.e., the intimate spirit. This search of the finite spirit for the infinite spirit its source is what constitutes religion. This can be traced to the submission of St Augustine as the restlessness of the human spirit for its source; the infinite spirit or, in other words, God. That is why man experiences uneasiness, dissatisfaction and insecurity. He experience an emptiness or a vacuum within him and nothing finite can satisfy his most basic desire which he often does not quite understanding himself.

3.8The Functions of Religion

Anything can easily be discarded once it is discovered to be of no value. Often, the value of something will also depend on its importance and usefulness. Hence, one may ask, that, bearing in mind the above objections to religion, can it be waved aside as an insignificant aspect of human existence? Why is the religious dimension of human life so important? Emile Durkheim pointed out three major functions of religion.

Social Cohesion

The shared symbols, value and norms of religion unite people. Religious doctrine and ritual establish rules of "fair play" that makes organized social life possible. Religion also involves love and commitment, which

underscore both our moral and emotion ties to others (Wright & D'Atonio, 1980:48).

Social Control

Every society uses religious imagery and rhetoric to promote conformity. Societies give many cultural norms - especially those that deal with marriage and reproduction are given religions justification and control. Religion even legitimizes the political system. In medieval Europe, in fact monarchs claimed to rule by divine right Few of today's political leaders invoke religion so explicitly, but many publicly ask for God's blessing, implying to audiences that their effort are just and right.

Providing Meaning and Purpose

Religious beliefs offer the comforting sense that the vulnerable human condition serves some greater purpose. Strengthened by such conviction, people are less likely to despair when confronted by life's calamities. For this reason, major life – course transitions – including birth, marriage, and death – are usually marked by religious observances that enhance our spiritual awareness. (Mascionis 1999; 483)

3.9Religion in Human Society

"Society", says Peter Berger (1967:3) "is a human product and nothing but a human product that yet continuously acts back upon its producer". In other words, from a symbolic – interaction point of view, religion, (like all of society) is socially constructed (although perhaps with divine inspiration). Through various rituals – from daily prayers to annual religious observances like Easter or Passover individuals sharpen the distinction between the sacred and profane.

Further, Berger explains; by placing everyday events within a "cosmic frame of reference" people give their fallible, transitory creations "the semblance of ultimate security and permanence". Scholars have also stressed the fact that religion support social hierarchy. Religion, claimed Karl Marx, serves ruling elites by legitimizing the status quo and diverting people's attention from social inequalities.

Religion and social inequality are also linked through gender. Virtually all the world's major religions reflect and encourage male dominance in social life. We also need to emphasize how religion has promoted changes and equality. Nineteenth-century religious in

the United States, for example, were at the forefront of the movement to abolish slavery. During the 1950s and 1960s, religious organizations and their leaders (including the Reverend Martin Luther King. Jr.) were at the core of civil rights movements.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Despite the myriad attacks on religion, its continued existence and importance in human affairs confirms that it certainly fulfils certain cognate functions; hence to dismiss it as unimportant is to leave an unfathomable vacuum in the social order.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have been able to study the etymology, definitions and the various theories of religion; the anthropological, psychological, theological, Marxist and sociological theories of religion.

6.0TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Discuss one definition of religion and examine the merit and demerits.
2. Does religion have any function(s) in human society? Explain.
3. State briefly the sociological theory of religion.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Mascionis, J. J. (1999). *Sociology.* 7th edition New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

Omoregbe, J. I. (1993). *A Philosophical Look at Religion.* Lagos: J.E.R.P

Maimela, S. S. (1990). *Modern trends in Theology*. Cape Town: Skotaville Publishers.

Barth, K. (1972). *The Humanity of God.* Richmond: John Knox Publishers.

Mamella, S. S. (2003). "Salvation in African Traditional Religions", *Missionalia* 13. (no.21) p. 18.

Warneck, M. (1960). *Ethics since 1900.* London: Oxford University Press.

UNIT 3 PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

For anyone to subscribe to a religion, then it must be accepted that such a person is also accepting certain purely philosophical doctrines. For example, if you believe in a non-material God, then you believe that not all that exists is material, and that means you accept a metaphysics of immaterialism. If you believe that you should love your neighbour because God said you should, then you are taking sides in the debate among ethical philosophers. You have committed yourself to a stand against naturalism. These and many other metaphysical, ethical and epistemological points of view and principles are assumed by, and incorporated in religion, and it is the business of the philosophy of religion to understand and rationally evaluate them. So naturally, the philosophy of religion is not only necessary, but the end product of human quest for knowledge.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of the study in this unit, you should be able to:

- understand the background history to philosophy of religion
- understand the need for philosophy of religion as a discipline
- state the functions of philosophy of religion
- evaluate the problems of philosophy of religion
- state the goals of philosophy of religion
- explain the causes of tension in between philosophy and religion
- note the terms of reference for both
- discuss the relationship between philosophy and theology.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Background to Philosophy of Religion

The Enlightenment helped to shape the philosophical and intellectual climate of the eighteenth–century. This intellectual movement made conscious and deliberate break with the past and ushered in the so called modern period by taking a fresh look at reality and presenting a different view of the natural world, of human nature, of society and of religion. A feature of the enlightenment was the conviction that the past, especially the Middle Ages, had been dark and that the eighteenth-century signalled the dawn of a new age, variously known as the age of Enlightenment, the age of reason, the *Aufklarung* (German) and the *Siecle des Lumiers* (French). There was a sense of humanity emerging from darkness to new light, because now human being could rely on reason and see what their predecessors could not see clearly.

In consequence, men of the enlightenment raised questions about humanity and its destiny, about the origin and character of religion, about the source of state authority. In the process, they called into question long–cherished beliefs and various social sanctions. In short, the principles of criticism applied by the thinkers of the enlightenment struck at the very foundation of organized religion and government.

Initially, enlightenment was not antireligious, despite its insistence on the principle of criticism and on freedom of faith and conscience which led it to assign to reason the noble task of being "our last judge of and guide in everything" – even in matters of religion.

Before long, the Bible began to lose its authority and credibility as it became clear that certain Biblical accounts, such as the creation stories, could not stand the test of reason, especially after the discoveries of Copernicus, Galileo and Newton had convincingly demonstrated that the earth was not the centre of the universe but revolves around the sun. Thus, was born the greatest attack to religion in the Western society. But through the ages, scholars have also come up with various theories in defence of religion but this cannot be done without first understanding the basis, technique and areas of departure that existed between philosophy and religion. Hence, the discipline of philosophy of religion was given birth to.

3.2 The Need for Philosophy of Religion

> In the past, the practitioners of the discipline of philosophy have often viciously attacked religion and all it entails and thereby discarding it as mere superstition. This is because these philosophers were insensitive to religion. Some of them even assert that the term philosophy of religion is unintelligible. This is why the likes of Lord Mosley have argued that those that must engage in philosophy of religion must at least have an idea of what religion is al about.

Philosophy of religion centres largely on the metaphysical, ethical and epistemological beliefs of religion that philosophers have sought to understand and evaluate. Many of these beliefs have to do with God.

GOD: that he exists, that he is good, that he created the universe and is the source of all that is real, that he is a personal deity; that he is the transcendent deity, and so forth.

Many also have to do with HUMANS: that human were created in the image of God, that they have free will, that they can have knowledge of God's will, that the human soul is immortal, and so on.

Other beliefs have to do with the universe. For example, that there are miracles; that there is supernatural reality, that there is pain and suffering (a fact thought to require reconciliation with the belief in a good and all powerful God).

And still others have to do with language. That religious language is intelligible and meaningful; that religious utterance are (or are not) factual assertions or are (or are not) metaphorical or analogical, that terminology used in describing God mean the same (or does not mean the same) as when it is used in describing other things.

The philosopher looks at religious beliefs from his vantage position as an epistemologist. Thus one can say that philosophy of religion is the epistemological, ethical, psychological, metaphysical and logical investigation into the nature, grounds and functions of religious faith. Philosophy of religion is entirely a theological enterprise with no concern for the conversion of any one.

3.3 Problems of Philosophy of Religion

The problems faced by the philosopher of religion stems basically from the numerous faith–based assertions of religion; for instance, there are questions such as: What is religion? What is a religious faith? What is divine goodness? What is omnipotence? In what features could one recognize a vision? Also the philosopher of religion is interested in philosophical explanations of how religious believers could have

knowledge through religious instruction but without benefit of theoretical and systematic investigations. Finally, the philosopher of religion discussed the problem of evil and other related issues, such as freewill, determinism and predestination. The problem of evil has always functioned centrally in philosophical and theoretical inquiries and has been intensively debated in the twentieth century. The problem of evil is a particular good example of such a recurrence of problems belonging to other areas of philosophy particularly ethics, metaphysical and logic.

3.4 The Goals of Philosophy of Religion

The philosopher of religion is concerned primarily with the norms or standard of genuine religion. He examines the principles of religious faith and conditions without which religion cease to be religion. These principles are already implicit in ordinary religious experience, but not consciously recognized as same by the rank and file of believers. It is the task of philosophy of religion to disentangle and categorize these principles. It is necessary to consider whether they are self- consistent and also whether they fit with the general world-view.

3.5 Tension between Philosophy and Religion

When we talk about the tension between philosophy and religion, we are not particularly concerned within religion and the tension caused by particular doctrine, either of religion or philosophy. Rather, the tension consists in a sharp difference in mental habit and outlook with regards to the same objects of attention. As Archbishop Temple remarked, “the primary assurance of religion are the ultimate question of philosophy”. One of the main features of religion is that it finds its fullest expression in absolute surrender to the object of worship. But with regard to philosophy, the very existence of that object is main theme. Some philosophers would argue that it is not possible to surrender oneself to what is felt to be an unverified hypothesis. It is not possible to discuss initially the existence of a being to whom one is utterly self–surrendered. The question is then often asked, how can a religious person be a free philosopher? By the same token the religious person asks, how can a philosopher who has not yet solved the basic questions of philosophy exercise such unrestricted quest on religion. Archbishop Temple argues that this seeming tension may be partly resolved in the following ways:

a. The philosopher must be able to distinguish between the real elements in his faith that of real spiritual importance.

b. The philosopher, while accepting the method of science in accounting for experience must also recognize the possible applicability of other categories.
c. He must guard against sentimental or traditional religious beliefs which have been crystallized into dogmatism.
d. He must recognize the fact that intuitions, a sense of value and personalities are part of the ultimate reality that he wishes to investigate.
e. He must concern himself with man's ultimate place in reality while recognizing that there are depths into which reason alone cannot penetrate.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The Enlightenment made the authenticity of the Holy Scripture as a medium of divine revelation come under increasing attack and its authority questioned. Appeal to the miracles reported in the Bible to guarantee the truthfulness of the divine message also proved inadequate. But the discoveries of Newton made many to realize that the universe was governed by natural laws which rendered it self–contained and self–explanatory. Hence, it appeared that Christianity is almost rendered defenceless.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, the origin of the Enlightenment and its contribution to the thinking of the eighteenth–century has been highlighted. Also, the problems, goals, tension and terms of reference of philosophy of religion have been examined.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. What is the contribution of the enlightenment to the philosophical thought of the eighteenth-century?
2. What are the goals of philosophy of religion?
3. What are the problems the philosopher of religion is faced with?

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Mascionis, J. J. (1999). *Sociology.* 7th edition New Jersey: Prentice Hall

Omoregbe, J. I. (1993). *A Philosophical Look at Religion;* Lagos: J.E.R.P.

Maimela, S. S. (1990). *Modern trends in Theology*. Cape Town: Skotaville Publishers.

Barth, K. (1972). *The Humanity of God.* Richmond: John Knox.

Maimela, S. S. (2003). "Salvation in African Traditional Religions", *Missionalia* Vol. 13, No. 21.

Warneck, M. (1960). *Ethics since 1900.* London: Oxford University Press.

UNIT 4 THE ORIGIN OF THE WORLD

CONTENTS

1.0INTRODUCTION

This unit examines critically the scientific theories of creation of the world and comparing it with what is contained in religion. Through the ages, the varying submissions of science and religion have caused untold tensions between both areas of human endeavour. The eighteenth-century was a most trying period for religion as the scientific discoveries of the period completely swept the rug under religion. Some of the submissions of the period that placed religion in almost a defenceless state will be examined here.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- explain the meaning of cosmic evolution.
- relate this effectively with the big bang theory
- understand the meaning of biological evolution
- explain Charles Darwin's theory of biological selection
- state the notable differences in the scientific theories in relation to the Biblical accounts.
- analyze the strong and weak points of both accounts.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Cosmic Evolution

Cosmic evolution is the scientific theory of the big bang that explains creation without a creator. The orthodox Christian belief is that God created the cosmos '*ex-nihilo'* meaning creating out of nothing. This religious dogma is opposed to the scientific hypothesis that the cosmos came about in a gradual process that spans several billions of years following the natural laws of nature. In short cosmic evolution is an explanation of creation without the influence of any supernatural being.

Science and religion have always been at each other's neck with regards to which of them has the authentic explanation of the origins of the cosmos, most scholars who have attempted to bridge the gap between the two claims have always been of the view that the rabidity of one side does not invalidate the other. It is presumed that both theories are in fact complementary. It is however clear that no matter how good the effort may be to make science and religion come to terms on evolution; they will always remain strange bedfellows. The position of one can never be fully satisfactory to the other. There will always remain fundamental problems to be addressed. The question that has been constantly nudging the claim of the scientist is that can there be creation without a creator? How credible are the scientific theory of evolution and the Biblical accounts of creation?

3.2 The Big Bang Theory

According to scientists, in the beginning there was the cosmic egg. Before the cosmic egg there was nothing, there was no time nor space. Paul Davies describes this as the "singularity" in the cosmic egg. All man and energy are compressed almost to infinite density and heated to trillions upon trillions of degrees. A cosmic explosion rent that nature-less mass, created rapidly expanding fireballs. That famous explosion is known as the big bang. The big bang probably occurred about twenty billion years ago by scientific reckoning. Essentially, all that comes out of the big bang are lightest gases, of hydrogen, deuterium, and helium. The accumulation of these gases by the natural gravitational attraction of their electrons (an electron has a nucleus consisting of protons and neutrons) combined together to form matter from which all the stars including our solar system and the earth were formed.

Since there was no visible matter before the big bang, a problem now arises; at what point did hydrogen gas become solid matter? And what was the principle behind it? It has been discovered that energy can be

used to create matter even in a laboratory, but it will always be accompanied by equal quantity of anti matter, which will result in self annihilation when the two meet, the result is it will be back to square one- no matter. Paul Davies tries to solve this by saying that during the big bang, huge quantities of energy were available to cause the incoherent production of vast amounts of matter and anti matter. He claims that with ultra-high temperature of the big bang, for every billion anti-protons there will be an outer one proton. Similarly, electrons would have outnumbered protons. This excess though minute would be very important in the carnage that will be followed the billions matched pairs of protons and anti protons would have simmered along with a single electron. He concluded that, these leftover particles-almost an after thought frail that eventually formed all galaxies, all the stars and the planets. Consequently our universe is formed out of a tiny residue of unbalanced matter that survives as a relic of the first unthinkable brief moment of existence.

3.3 Matter

After explaining the origin of the basic constituents of matter and how it came about the next problem is how clouds of gas and dust can become solid materials like gold, stone, iron, and even form the bones and flesh of man and animals. Scientists are of the opinion that a vast cloud of gas several billions of mites in diameter moving in spiral form will cause a mutual gravitational attraction of the atoms in the gas cloud. This eventually will form a residue of solid matter which will be compressed to form a huge ball or star. When the density of matter is massive enough, the now solidified star will detach itself from the parent cloud and it will cause its thermo-nuclear furnace to fire up. Just like our own sun which is a star of average size, various materials condense from the cookmey disk, collide, and coalesce to form the planets and other features our solar system. A star after its birth as described above will have its own planets which are probably mature stars in their own right. They will be together in the orbit by their mutual gravitational force. Whether biological life will develop on a particular planet will depend on its position with regard to the star which supplies the solar energy that is needed to evolve and sustain biological life.

3.4 Biological Evolution

The theory of evolution rests on same biological laws, they are; natural selection, genetic mutation, adaptation, variation and struggle for existence. Life began from nonliving organic matters, from the parent cloud of hydrogen out of which all existing things are descended. The idea is that there are four gases namely, ammonia, methane, hydrogen and water. When they mixed together and are energized through electric

spark will produce amino acid which is the molecular building blocks of all living matter. According to Gastro Roberts, the amino acids, accumulating in the oceans built up a nutritional broth. Random collisions in the broth, occurring again and again over millions of years' linked small molecules into large ones. And finally produced a molecule on the threshold of life, once the threshold of life was crossed, evolution commenced and the laws of natural selection came into play to produce the variety of plants and animals that now exist on our planet.

In the nutritional broth, or what other scientists called primeval soup under the ocean where life evolved, the ransom collusion of the molecules produced more complicated substances like sugar and proteins which are necessary part of all living things. It is the combination of protein in a living being that will determine whether it will be a plant, man, insect or an elephant. This theory probably influenced Charles Darwin's claim that all diversity of life on earth had resulted from natural random processed and not, as was previously believed, from the creative activity of God. It is pertinent to point out that all the conditions necessary for creating life in the laboratory have been put in place, with living matter accumulating in the flask, but no living organism has emerged out of it because it requires time, the primeval soup take millions of years before life emerged from it.

A simple objection to this claim is that, how come life has not been growing again under the ocean floor? Biologists however, do not think living organisms will develop in the ocean floor today because the oceans are teaming with many creatures that would eat up any protein or nucleic acids as soon as they were formed. Charles Darwin, the man whose brilliant researches brought the theory of evolution to the fore front posits that life evolved from the organic matters through microbes, to sea creatures, from which the amphibians developed. From them came the mammals and apes, these finally evolved to become homo-sapiens. In short, the human closest relations in the lineage of evolution are the apes. How new species came out of the old ones is through genetic mutation. Genetic mutation is a mistake in the attempt of the cells to copy themselves for onward transmission to their offspring. The mistakes often results in accidental passing on to of special quality to the offspring, which will in turn pass on to many more generations.

From the foregoing, a struggle for existence inevitably follows from the high rate at which all organic being tend to increase. The struggle for existence may be between animals of the same species competing for the limited supply of food, mating or from predator specie. The situation will become survival of the fittest, those species that are able to adapt to their environment survive, while the weak specie will die out.

3.5 The Biblical Account of Creation

In the book of Genesis chapter one, God merely spoke and creation came to be. The different species of animals and plants that we see were all created by the conscious and deliberate act of God. Hence, the creation of world and all its fullness has no other source than God. This was brought into being by the creative ability of God spanning six days. Finally, when God saw that all he has created was good and perfect. He rested on the seventh day. In the Bible, the idea of creation out of nothing is stressed. Nothing was needed to execute the God's grand project.

3.6 An Analysis of both Accounts

Both biblical and scientific accounts agreed that the universe came about in time and will end in time. They, however, have different time scales that it will end. There was also a primordial chaos which in religions view God gave order to, but in science, the order came by blind chance (random collusion of molecules and atoms). While evolutionary theory holds that all living things, animal and plants alike come from a singular source. Religion on the other hand establishes that each species is created to type from time immemorial. The question now is how credible is the idea of creation without a creator? The cosmic egg that was there before the big bang, who put it in place? The chemical substances available within the cosmic egg (that finally became matter), where did they originate from? The natural laws of nature that baby sat evolution in the absence of a creator, where are they from? These are fundamental questions science cannot answer. This consequently jeopardizes the credibility of the theory of a creation without a creator.

4.0 CONCLUSION

All evidence point to the fact that religion and science, though strange bedfellows, are perhaps two sides of the same coin. In their explanation of the origin of the universe, they consent that science should consider that God would have worked through the natural selection and of the laws of nature to bring the universe into existence. Science on the other hand should recognize its limitations and accept that a conscious being would have been responsible for the cosmic egg, the primeval soup, from which biological life evolved and provide the suitable condition for the gradual evolution of all things.

5.0 SUMMARY

We have been able to carefully examine both scientific and Biblical accounts of the creation of the world. Also, the areas of agreement and

contentions in both accounts have been highlighted, and in conclusion, the possible meeting point for both religion and science was recommended.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Compare and contrast the biblical creation account and the theory of evolution.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Robert, J. (1990). *Red Giants and White Dwarfs*. New York: W. W. Norton and Company Inc.

Robert, J. (1978). *God and the Astronomers*. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc.

Adeyemi, P. O. (1999). "Cosmic Evolution: Creation without a creation"? *The Sage.*

UNIT 5 THE ORIGIN OF THEODICY

CONTENTS

1.0INTRODUCTION

Why hasn't the progress of science brought joy and real happiness to humankind? No one doubts the great advance in scientific knowledge since Sir Isaac Newton's great leap. Progress in communication, the supply of human material needs and the control of diseases have been taken to tremendous heights. However, to offset these, we also witness in the industrialized world many disturbing developments; a marked rise in suicide, a feeling of nihilism, drug abuse, depression, stress, and conflicts between nations. In this unit, you will be able to study the origin of the need to prove the existence of God (*theodicy*) and the role played by science in finding the opposite.

2.0OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- state the etymology of theodicy
- define theodicy
- discuss the history of theodicy
- describe the various approaches to theodicy.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Etymology of Theodicy

The word theodicy is from two Greek words, *theos*, (meaning God) and *dike,* (meaning righteousness or justice). Theodicy therefore means God's righteousness or justice. To write a theodicy is to write an apology in defence of God (Oshitelu: 2002; 146). It is to say in spite of all the evil or seeming evil in the world, God is good, righteous and just. A theodicy is a justification of the goodness of God in the face of evil. One of the most powerful arguments against the existence of God who is both almighty and all loving lies in fact of a moral and natural or physical evil.

3.2 Definition of Theodicy

Theodicy is the branch of philosophy which is specifically concerned with the study of the supreme supernatural Being- God. Also called natural theology, theodicy studies God's existence, nature and attributes. It lays emphasis on the search for, and discovery of God by human reason. (Iroegbu, 2002, 18) Though it does not deny revelation, yet it does not base its search on revealed dogma as fundamental dogmatic theology does. Theodicy research is based on the light of reason.

3.3 The Need for Theodicy

God is conceived and portrayed differently by different religion and different philosophical systems. For philosophy and religion are the two main disciplines that attempt to answer the question, what is God. Man is preoccupied about the question of God because he is preoccupied about himself, about his own existence, the meaning and purpose of his existence, where he came from and where he is going, especially what will happen to him after death. It is the problem of man that leads to the problem of God. This leads to religion and to preoccupation about God.

The cultural belief of a religious society goes a long way to determine how God would be seen in such a society. Every religion, without exception is the product of a culture and is part of that culture.

3.4 St. Augustine's Theodicy

St Augustine of Hippo (354–430 A.D) contributed in no small measure in bringing Christian theology to its present state. St Augustine's

theology can be designated as a development of Platonism and Neo–Platonism. His theodicy can be classified under four themes; viz. Evil as p*rivatio boni* (privation of good), freewill argument, principle of plenitude and aesthetic theme.

Under the first theme, Augustine affirmed that the mistake we all make is our attempt to think of evil as something, a substance. Augustine opined that evil is not a thing but rather a privation, an absence of being, for there is no substance created by God which is not good. Describing this, and bearing in mind that theism demands we hold that God is the creator of all there is, he writes; "to you, then, evil is utterly not and not only you, but to your whole creation likewise, evil is not." This conclusion springs from his premise that "…… I saw clearly and realized that you have made all things good, and that there are no substances not made by you! (*Confession*. 7:12), as quoted by (Watson 1967; 32).

Aside of this, Augustine also held, under the principle of *plenitude theme*, that the good in the world outweighs evil in it. It is doubtful that this principle of plenitude has less to do with another theme called the *Aesthetic theme*, where he argued that what we refer to as evil occur when we fail to look at creation form a holistic point of view. This is because for Augustine, what we refer to as evil is just apart of the mixture of good and bad, which is necessary to have an excellent picture of the universe. It is (Jaiyeola's 2003; 22), like a mixture of bright and dull colours, which in the end will give a good picture to behold.

The fourth theme under which Augustine discussed the problem of evil is *the Freewill Argument*. Here, Augustine held that freewill is a gift from God. His argument is that moral evil is as a result of man's misuse of his freewill by turning away from God, the Supreme Substance towards lower things.

3.5 The Theodicy of Leibniz

For Leibniz, the issue involved in the problem of evil is two fold (Murray, 2003:1). These are the *underachiever* problem' and the *holiness* problem'. The *underachiever* problem means that the present world is a vast under achievement when one considers the nature of God as described by monotheism and the holiness problem states that since God is the author of everything that exists, and evil is one of such, God is thereby implicated and it cannot therefore be claimed God is pure or holy. The doctrine of the best possible world was adduced holy by Leibniz to justify the presence of evil in the world. Thus, for Leibniz, there is no *underachievement*. But we must note that this position gives room for the need to qualify the term omnipotence.

3.6 The Theodicy of Barth

For Karl Barth, what we call evil is *"nothingness",* that is something that has been vanquished or destroyed. For him, God is the sovereign over all and his sovereignty extends over nothingness. His goodness nonetheless cannot be affected by evil, since it is not part of God's positive will. He went further to assert that the power of this nothingness (*Das Nistalitige*) has been defeated by the power of Christ on the cross.

4.0 CONCLUSION

It is a tenable thesis that these scholars, mentioned above, as well as many other philosophers, the theologians, and some Christians have attempted to impinge it upon us humans that there are reasonable grounds to conclude that this world of ours, with what may be referred to as factual accounts of enormous evil was brought into existence by a good omnipotent God. This actually is the goal of Theodicy.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have been able to examine the etymology, definitions and the origin of theodicy, by highlighting the contributions of scholars that were at the very hub of theodicy at its inception.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. What is the meaning of the word 'Theodicy'
2. Explain briefly the theodicy of St Augustine
3. Comment freely on the theodicy of Leibniz

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Abati, R. "What Had God to do with it?" *The Guardian*, January 29, 2006.

Brooke, N. M. (1980). *Philosophy: The Power of Ideas.* 5th ed. New York: McGraw Hill.

Flew, A. (1966). "Divine Omnipotent and Human Freedom" in Flew, A. and Maclntyre, A. (eds.) *New Essays in Philosophical Theodicy.* London: SCM Press Ltd.

Jaiyeola, A. A. (2005). "The Omnipotent of God and the Problem of Evil in the World: A Paradox" *NASRED.* Vol. 8, No. 2.

Mackie, J. L. (1995). "Evil and Omnipotent*"* *Mind*, Vol. LXIV, No. 254.

Murray, M. (2003). "Leibniz on the Problem of Evil" *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* retrieved online on 03/06/2003.

Okanlawon, A. B. (2000). "Humanism and influence on Tai Solarin" in Okanlawon A. B. and Fasanmi O. T. (eds.) *Tai Solarin: the Making of a Humanist*. *Nigeria:* Admass Publishing Company.
Omoregbe, J. (1980). "The Problem of Evil in the World" *West African Religion* Vol. XIX.

Smart, N. (1969). *Philosophers and Religious Truth.* London: SCM Press.

Solarin, Tai. (1987). *Greek Philosophy and the Christian Notion of God* Dublin: The Columbia Press.

Online Resources

http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/problemofevil.

MODULE 2 THEISM

UNIT 1 MEANING AND ORIGIN OF THEISM

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

From what science tells us, it seems that everything that happens can be explained by the processes, regularities, and inter-relationships described by physics, chemistry and biology. There are no gaps in these laws of nature where God can feature. Nature looks after itself. If this is true, then God is without a job-assuming there is a God in the first place.

> The sciences have put to one side many important aspects of reality in order to understand certain basic processes, relationships, and structures in nature. The resulting knowledge about these underlying features of the world is very powerful- but also incomplete and provisional. There is, and always will be, a lot that we do not know, even about those things upon which science focuses its attention:

gravity, matter, life, the human brain, the world, to say nothing of ourselves, is much more intricate and mysterious than the methods of science can unravel. Science leaves out of its consideration any discussion of the origin of those laws and regularities- and ultimately, God – to whom many have ascribed the origin of all things. This we shall now turn our attention to fully.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- state the meaning of theism
- explain in your own words what God is
- discuss the role of culture in the formation of an idea about God
- mention the similarities in the concept of God in the various world religions
- describe the idea of God in philosophical thought.

3.0MAIN CONTENT

3.1What is God?

Theism can be defined simply as the study or discourse about God. It is derived from the Greek word '*theos'* meaning 'God'. Here, we shall focus on what scholars have thought God to be. In 1948 Bertrand Russell, a foremost historian of western philosophy and Fredrick Copestones agreed on the definition of God as: *a supreme personal being, distinct from the world and creator of the world'.*

3.2Does God exist?

In answer to the why men worry about God's existence, St. Thomas Aquinas argued that we need a rational demonstration of God's existence because his existence is not self-evident, that is, not known by definition or implanted by nature to every person. In actual sense, many people doubt the existence of God; some others outrightly deny it. Some often claim we can't tell whether he exists or not.

When we talk about God what exactly are we talking about? Do we have in mind an old bearded man living in the heavens or in space? Is God a material or an immaterial being? Is he part of the universe or distinct from the universe? Is he the sum-total of all that exist, the totality of all beings? Is that what we mean by the term God? Is it nature? Whichever way we look at it, we are all starting from the first premise that the God we are trying to define his nature must truly exist.

French philosopher, Michel Foucault, argues that if humanity were in generalized doubt with regard to the existence of God, there would be unimaginable disaster both in life and thought of humans to such an extent that it would result in 'the death of man"

3.3The Quest for God

Miguel de Unamuno has attempted to answer why man is continually preoccupied about the question of God when he says, "man is preoccupied about the question of God because he is pre-occupied about himself, about his own existence, the meaning and purpose of his existence, his past and his future." The search for the meaning of human existence is according to Unamuno, prompted man's basic thirst for immortality, the thirst for self-perpetuation, which underlies all human endeavours. Thus, man's thirst for God is rooted in his natural thirst for immortality.

Sartre describes this natural thirst for immortality as a desire to become God. It manifests itself, according to Sartre, in man's feeling of emptiness and uneasiness within him. Man naturally feels a vacuum, an emptiness, to fill the emptiness he experiences within him and to seek a foundation for his being, mankind therefore cannot stop thinking or talking about God, nor can religion ever be completely wiped out of human society as long as the thirst for immortality, the instinct of self– perpetuation, remains part of human nature.

3.3Culture and Conceptualization of God

The way God is conceived and portrayed in any religion is a reflection of the worldview and beliefs of the culture that gave birth to that religion (Omeregbe, 1993: 28). Every religion is the product of culture and part of that culture. Christianity is the product of Jewish Hellenistic–Roman culture and an integral part of that complex culture. Islam is a product of the culture of the Arabs. Confucianism and Taoism are products of the Chinese culture and integral parts of that culture. It is through culture that people live their lives and interpret their life experience. It colours, shapes and limits a people's view of reality, for it serves as the lenses through which people look at reality and interpret it. This explains why it is impossible for the people of one culture to have identical worldview and value as those of the people of other cultures because they look at reality and interpret it through different cultural lenses. The difficulty experienced by people in a given cultural setting in accepting and effectively comprehending the concept of God brought

to them from another cultural background is understandable on the ground of differing cultural settings.

This can adequately explain why many in the western societies living in the hub of industrialization and scientific wonders find it difficult to relate effectively Judeo–Christian concept of a God that is "out there", and hence many are abandoning Christianity.

3.4God as Conceived in Religion

Anthropomorphism is common to all religions in the concept of God. That is, he is conceived in the image and likeness of man, with all human attributes. He has eyes, ears mouth, hands, feet, nose, emotions etc. like human beings. He can be offended and become angry like any human being. He can become tired after working hard, and would need rest.

The God of religion is as emotional as human beings; he can hate, can become jealous, can be moved with anger when offended and is often vindictive. The God of religion is, in short an anthropomorphic deity.

The almightiness of God is also called into question because he is portending to have human limitations and human weaknesses entailed in human beings. Scholars have argued that he is able to remove evil from the world which he is said to have created nor is he normally perfect since he is also subject to anger, jealousy and hate like human limitations and thus cannot be infinite or almighty. Thus, there is an intrinsic concentration in the concept of the God of religion.

3.5The Christian God

In the same vein, the God portrayed as the Christian God is also anthropomorphic in nature. The triune nature of this God, immediately confirms this. The Christian God, the father, is depicted to have sent the son–Jesus into the world for the salvation of humanity. This shows that they are ontologically distinct beings. When the second person .has accomplished his mission, the third person (the Holy Spirit) was also sent by the same person (the father) on a mission to the world. It was the first person (the father) who created the world; it was the second person who came to the world to redeem it, while the third person came later to sanctify it. Each had its own specific role and function in relation to the world – one is the creator, the other is the redeemer, while the third is the sanctifier. All

these show clearly that the doctrine of the trinity of God is a doctrine of three ontologically distinct beings constituting one being.

3.6The Islamic God

The Islamic theologian Gafar Sheikh Idris, discuss the anthropomorphic nature of the Allah of Islam in his article "*The Attribute of God*: *An Islamic point of view*. But philosophy of religion will ask if God is really an anthropomorphic being? If God were really to possess these human traits, he would be imperfect and limited, for imperfection and limitation are implied in these attributes. But we still have to examine the concept of God in Islam.

Unlike in Christianity, Islam strongly rejects the idea that Allah is a father, that he has or could have a son (19:2a, 88), it equally rejects the Christian Trinitarian doctrine. There cannot be three persons in God, for Allah is one and unique (Qur'an 5:70). Nevertheless, Allah remains an anthropomorphic deity, with hands, feet, eyes and knows all things. He is merciful, compassionate and forgiving. He sits on his throne. In short, the Allah of Islam is no less anthropomorphic than the Christian God or the Yahweh of Israel. In fact, the Allah of Islam is identical with the Yahweh of Israel.

It is the same Semitic deity called Yahweh by Israel and Allah by the Arabs who asked Abraham (the common ancestral father of both the Israelites and the Arabs) to sacrifice his son to him, just to test Abraham's faith. This deity was not sure whether or not Abraham had faith in him and he wanted to find out by carrying out a test on Abraham. This means he had no foreknowledge, he was not omniscient, and otherwise there would have been no need for him to test him. However, when Abraham was ready to slaughter his son in obedience to Allah's order, this deity became convinced that Abraham really has faith in him – he now knew what he did not know before. He then stopped Abraham from slaughtering his son and asked to slaughter a ram in lieu of his on.

Various other attributes are credited to the God of Islam, but the fact of anthropomorphism cannot be erased from all these attributes. The God of religion generally is an anthropomorphic God. Religion will be impracticable without such an anthropomorphic idea. Praying, singing, burning incense, offering sacrifice and asking for forgiveness among others, all presuppose that God is an anthropomorphic deity, otherwise these religious practices would be meaningless. To conceive God both as an anthropomorphic deity and as a perfect and infinite being is to involve oneself in self contradiction, and this is precisely what religions do. The God of

religion is, an embodiment of contradiction and mutually exclusive attributes, and as such it is simply the product of human imagination, existing only in the minds of religious people.

3.7The God of Philosophy

The overbearing influence of anthropomorphism in the God of religion is something that is unacceptable to most philosophers; hence, many have tried to conceive an idea of God that will be devoid of such an influence like the God of religion. The early fathers of the Church, who were mostly Neo-Platonists, formed a conception of God which is quite different from the biblical deity.
The articulate mind of the philosopher starts by inquiring whether God is a material or an immaterial being. If it were a physical, corporeal being it would be an object of sense perception with the senses. God that cannot be a material, physical being. If God is immaterial then it cannot be corporeal, with physical body or parts of the body like eyes, ears, noses, mouth etc. nor can we talk of God as being angry, having compassion, being jealous, loving or hating. All these apply only to a corporeal being, with emotions. But since God is not a corporeal being these cannot be applicable to him.

The concept of God of classical philosophy is based on metaphysics of the ancient Greek philosophers, especially those of Heraclites, Parmenides and Plato. While Heraclites held that change was the law of nature and that everything was in the state of flux, Parmenides held that everything that changes was simply the illusion of the sense, that reality was in fact unchanging. Subsequent philosophers, like Plato tried to do improve more on this by postulating two worlds, namely, the transcendental, unchanging world and the changing world which can only be 'perceived' by reason while the latter is the physical world which we live. Change will connote weakness and imperfection, but immutability connotes perfection. Hence, God is immutable, for if God were subject to change, he would be an imperfect being like the imperfect beings in this changing, physical world.

Aristotle like his mentor Plato doubt that God could have any relation with this imperfect world, or with anything imperfect, since such a relation would mar God's absolute perfection and this includes even cognitive relation. Hence God, according to Aristotle does not know the world, nor does he think of it.

The early Church Fathers in like manner based their conception of God on this manner which is quite different from the anthropomorphic deity portrayed in the Bible. God for these founders of Christian philosophy is absolutely perfect, eternal and

immutable by his very nature. As an eternal, immaterial, absolutely perfect and self-subsisting being, God cannot be subject to change of any sort.

The fact of God being a self-subsisting being forms the basic and primary attribute of God of in classical philosophy. Thus from this, it follows that he is a necessary being, that is a being who cannot but exist, a being whose very essence involves existence as opposed to contingent beings who may or may not exist. From his existence it also follows that he is an absolute being since he is the ultimate source of being.

His infinity also follows from this. There cannot be more than one God, and he must be truly self-subsistent. Then if that is true, then, such a God cannot need man's worship since he is immutable and nothing external to him can affect or influence him. Can it make any difference to him whether he is worshipped or not? Also, can man ever influence him by his prayers or please him by his sacrifices? Since he is eternal, immutable and impossible can man ever succeed in inducing him to change his mind? His plan or his decision on any issue? This God as presented by classical philosophy is so different from the anthropomorphic God of religion.

4.0CONCLUSION

From the foregoing, it can be observed that various attempts by the human mind to effectively comprehend God have even made him more illusive to humans. At the end, an unwary observer may end up more confused than enlightened. But as illusive the idea of God may appear unto man, yet his existence and reality is as visible as it can be imagined, when simply approached with a mind of faith.

5.0SUMMARY

In this unit we have examined the meaning and various ideas of what God is to different people; from the Christian to the Islamic and the classical philosophy the concept of God has been well exposed.

6.0TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Trace the similarities between the Christian and the Islamic ideas of God.
2. What are the major objections posed by the God of philosophy to the anthropomorphic idea of God in religion?
3. How will you define God?

7.0REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Flew, A. (1969). “Divine Omnipotent and Human Freedom” in Flew, A. and Macintyre, A. (eds.) *New Essays in Philosophical Theodicy*. London: SCM Press Ltd.

Jaiyeola, A. A. (2005). “The Omnipotence of God and the Problem of Evil in the World: A Paradox” *NASRED*. Vol. 8, No. 2.

Mackie, J. L. (1995). “Evil and Omnipotence”, *Mind*, Vol. LXIV, No. 254.

Murray, M. “Leibniz on the Problem of Evil” *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* retrieved online on 03/06/2003.

UNIT 2 THEISTIC ARGUMENTS

CONTENTS

1.0INTRODUCTION

The existence of God has been a long standing source of controversy for ages. From Plato to contemporary times, many have tried to answer in one way or the other with arguments. These arguments have mostly been aimed at proving that God exists. These arguments can be classified into the following:

Ontological argument
Cosmological arguments
Teleological arguments
Moral arguments
Argument from motion
Argument from efficient causality

2.0OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you are expected to:

- understand the meaning of ontological arguments
- define what is moral argument
- describe the nature of a teleological arguments
- state the essence of an argument from motion
- compare an argument from causality with other forms of arguments.

3.0MAIN CONTENT

3.1Ontological Arguments

Ontological arguments are arguments, for the conclusion that God exists, from premises which one supported to derive from some sources other than the observation of the world e.g. from reason alone. In other words, ontological arguments are arguments form nothing but analytic, a priori and necessary premises to the conclusion that God exists.

The first and best known ontological argument was proposed by St. Anselm of Canterbury in the 11th century A.D. In his *Pros logion*, St. Anselm claims to have derived the existence of God from the concept of *"a being than which no greater can be conceived*". St. Anselm reasoned that, if such a being fails to exist, then a greater being–namely; a being than which no greater can be conceived and which exist,–can be conceived. But this would be absurd: nothing can be greater than a being than which no greater can be conceived i.e., God exists.

In the seventh century, Rene Descartes defended a family of similar arguments. For instance, in the *Fifth Meditation*, Descartes claim to provide a proof demonstrating the existence of God from the idea of a supremely perfect being, which lacks of existence than there is in conceiving a triangle whose interior angles do not sum up to 180 degrees. Hence, he supposes, since we do have idea of a supremely perfect being – we must conclude that a supremely perfect being exists.

In the early eightieth century, Gottfried Leibniz, attempted to fill what he took to be a shortcoming in Descartes new theory. According to Leibniz, Descartes arguments fail unless one first shows that the idea of a supremely perfect being is constant, or that it is possible for there to be a supremely perfect being. Leibniz argued that, since perfections are unassailable, it is impossible to demonstrate that perfection are incompatible and he concluded from this part that all perfections can co-exist together in a single entity.

In more recent times, Kurt Gödel, Charles Hartshorne, Norman Malcolm and Alan Plantinga have all presented immense discourses on ontological arguments which bear interesting connections to the earlier argument of St. Anselm, Descartes and Leibniz. Of these, the most interesting are those of Gödel and Plantinga. In this case, however, it is unclear whether the claims that the arguments are proofs of the existence of God are true.

Criticism of Ontological Argument

Critiques of ontological arguments begin with Gaunillo, a contemporary of St. Anselm. Perhaps the best known criticisms of ontological arguments are due to Immanuel Kant, in his *Critique of pure Reason*. Most famously, Kant claims that ontological arguments are ciliated by their reliance upon the implicit assumption that "existence" is a predicate. However, Bertrand Russell observed, it is much easier to be persuaded that ontological arguments are no good than it is to say exactly what is wrong with them. This helps to explain why ontological arguments have fascinated philosophers for almost a thousand years.

3.2 Cosmological Argument

Proponent of cosmological arguments thinks that the existence of contingent things, things that could possibly not have existed point to the existence of a non contingent or necessary being, God, as their ultimate cause, creator, grand energizer, or Source Being. This argument is often viewed from various areas. One of this is from motion.

Motion

Human experience has taught us that things do move, probably set in motion by other things. These are in turn moved by some other things. For according to Aquinas, whatever is moved is moved by another. "But this progress of movement cannot be unending; there must be a last point of movement. Moreover there would even be no movement at all it there were no points from which the movement started. This point must not be moved by another, for if it were, there would be a regression to infinity of motion which makes impossible nonsense of any movement at all. The starting point of all movement is a first mover, an unmoved mover, he accounts for all the series of subsequent movements. This first unmoved mover is God.

Efficient Causality

In the universe, we empirically notice that things are produced (caused) by others. Nothing can be an efficient or productive cause of itself; otherwise it would be prior to itself, which is impossible. For the things that cause another must exists before the caused, in order to cause it. If things are thus caused efficiently in a series, there must be a starting point where the causing began from which the intermediate, which is responsible for all other causes, is what all people God.

Argument from Contingent and Necessary Being

Beings of our daily experience come and go, begin and disappear. They are contingent, and ephemeral. That is to say they are not necessary in their existence. They must not necessarily exist. Equally they can cease to exist. They are only possible. At a given time they were not. And they will stop sometime. Their reality is not necessary, but possible. But if all realities experienced by us are merely possible it is possible that there was sometime when they were not. There was time when nothing was. That time, nothing existed, since nothing had the necessity to exist. Thus, there would now be nothing if that situation persisted. But things do exist now.

What accounts for the existence of things that were merely possible must be a reality that is itself outside of the possible. This reality is a necessary being whose existence has a necessity that gives existence to all other realities that have only possible or contingent existence. This necessary cause of all contingent realty, itself uncaused, non-contingent, and necessary is God. Only the necessity of God can explain the contingency of other beings otherwise there possesses its own necessity of Aquinas, what all men call God.

Descartes Formulation

These three theistic arguments are summarized in Rene Descartes cosmological argument from 'my being'. Since I know myself to exist and that I am not the cause of my being who am finite, there must be another being that explain my being's existence. The derivation of myself. Since a cause must contain as much reality as the effect, the being that caused me must be a thinking being; a being that possesses the ideas and all the perfections. I attribute to God! Therefore God exists.

Criticism of Cosmological Argument

Empiricists generally, and especially Hume and Kant, reject the proofs. They deny the progression into the transcendental, the hormonal and the invisible world from the exponential one. They questioned the motion of causality, as it is used to extend to the unknown world of God. Causality, Kant argues, applies only to the world of sense experience. Beyond experience, we cannot venture. Since we cannot reach or go there, that is, outside here, outside our world of experience, we cannot therefore prove that God who is outside our physical domain exists.

For Hume, It is only the factors of contingency in space, constant conjunction and association of ideas that make us think that one thing is effect and another cause on vigorously empirical grounds, there is no cause on vigorously empirical grounds, there is no causality, no necessity, no first (unmoved) mover. The succession of events in reality requires no ultimate beginning, for the continuity can be indefinite. A first cause is unnecessary. It does not exist.

3.3 Moral Arguments

Immanuel Kant is the founder and greatest proponent of this proof. Human moral experience witnesses a consciousness of moral duty. Duty is an internal imperative of doing well and avoiding evil. This is a natural datum founded on a logical premise of a moral law-giver. This sense of duty resides in man's interior self. It is a dictate of practical reason characterized by duties and responsibilities for the good of all. At the same time, it is a moral route to God. One can have absolute moral obligations only if there is an absolute Being, God, to other men. These cannot be based on mere subjective, consequentiality and utilitarian grounds as Bertrand Russell, and Jasmine and other pragmatic ethicists, utilitarian or relativists would hold. Otherwise they would not be absolutes.

The moral argument holds essentially that if moral dictates are commands of conscience, there must be a commander to command them. The commander is God. If there are laws, e.g. natural laws, there must be a law giver, God. In his book on *Theodicy,* he emphasizes religion within the limits of reason alone, Kant conclusively argues to God's existence from the idea of man's natural desire for different grades of goods up to his desire for the highest good. "The idea of the ultimate good cannot be realized by man himself. Yet he discovers within himself the duty to work for this end. Hence, he finds himself impelled to believe in the cooperation of management of a moral Ruler of the world, by means which alone this goal can be reached."

Criticism of the Moral Argument

Critics of the moral argument accuse it of imposing God on humanity to explain what could be socially, naturally and civilly explained. That God is supreme legislator is purely arbitrary. After all, they conclude, the only objectivity in morals is its subjectivity and factual evolution. Humanity could as well be the author of moral laws including so call moral absolutes.

3.4 Teleological Argument

Teleological argument derives its name from the Greek word *teleos* (issue, order, fact, design) and *logos* (discourse, science, and knowledge. Hence, teleology is the description of the factual issues of the universe arising from the reality that one discovers in them; an embedded order, design and consequent purposefulness. In nature, especially in living organisms, there is an ordering of means to an end. Things are so adapted and arranged that ones sees the handiwork of some primordial reality responsible for the order, end and purpose.

At the highest point of the biological world is the human species. In him is also found teleology that is a pointer to Ultimacy. The perfection of man's being in the depository of his intelligence, memory and creativity, all combine to announce the imperative existence of a perfect being that designed and worked out these marvels of anthropology, personality and entire humanity. Teleologically, therefore, there is God who purposefully designed these functions to all created reality to their ends. Deliberately, he intelligently guides them to perform each at its heard. He consciously plans them to successfully work toward the goals and progressively tend toward the ultimate goal of divine ultimacy.

Criticism of Teleological Arguments

Critics stress the fact that the so called order in nature may not be so ordered after all. Order depends on perspective. In any case there are clear cases of disorder in the universe. Examples include the earthquakes, deserts, sea over-flooding, violent erosion etc. Even at the rational and moral levels, evil and crimes are cases of disorder. If there were a Being that accounted for Order, he would not be absolute indeed, for disorder is as evident as order. He did not order things enough. The conclusion is that there may not be an absolute intelligent order of nature.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The cosmological argument like the teleological argument takes its point of departure from the concrete and the plural, and from our experimental fact of the universe; our sensitivities, the way we see and consider the origin and progression of things in our world. But the ontological arguments differ in that it starts from the conclusion to the premise.

5.0SUMMARY

We have explained in this unit the teleological argument that speaks of design and order, to the cosmological which stresses the state of the physical world to infer the existence of a creator, to the ontological which believes in a being than which greater cannot be conceived.

6.0TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Discuss the ontological argument.
2. What is the main point of argument of the teleological argument?
3. Explain what the cosmological argument is all about.

7.0REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Flew, A. (1969). "Divine Omnipotent and human freedom" in Flew, A. and Macintyre, A. (eds.) *New Essays in Philosophical Theodicy*. London: SCM Press Ltd.

Mackie, J. L. (1995). "Evil and Omnipotence", *Mind*, Vol. LXIV, No. 254.

Omoregbe, J. (1980). "The Problem of Evil in the World" *West African Religion* Vol. XIX.

Smart, N. (1969). *Philosophers and Religious Truth*. London: SCM Press.

UNIT 3 ORIGIN AND MEANING OF ATHEISM

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, a comprehensive examination of the term "*atheism*" will be fully examined along with its related usages. You should carefully write the cognate words used in this unit so that you do not confuse them with similar one's used elsewhere.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- explain the etymology of atheism
- define atheism
- state the problems of the definition of terms
- relate a short history of atheism
- analyze the various types of atheism.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Etymology of Atheism

Atheism is a derivative of the Greek word a*theos* (from, the privative *atheios,* "godless"). The word began to indicate more intentional, active godlessness in the 5th century B.C, acquiring definitions of "severing relations with the gods" or "denying the gods, (ungodly)" Instead of the earlier meaning of classical texts sometimes render *atheos* as "atheistic" as an abstract noun, there was also *atheotes,* ("atheism"). Cicero translated the Greek word into Latin *atheos*. The term found frequent

use in the debate between early Christians and Hellenists, with each side attributing it, in the abusive sense, to the other.

3.2 History of the Word 'Atheism'

One of the earliest usages of the word *atheoi* is as it appears in the Epistle to the Ephesians (2:12), on the early third century Papyrus 46. It is usually translated into English as *"those who are without God"*. In English, the term *atheism* was derived from the French *atheisme* in about 1587. The term, atheist, from French *athee* is used in the sense of *'one who denies or disbelieves the existence of God*", predates *atheism* in English, being first attested in about 1571. *Atheist* as a label of practical godlessness was used at least as early as 1577. (Findlay1949:176). Related words emerged later; *delsin* 1662, *theism* in 1628 and *deism* in 1682. *Delsin* and theism changed meaning slightly around 1700, due to the influence of atheism; deism was originally used as a synonym for today's theism, but came to denote a separate philosophical doctrine.

Karen Armstrong submits that during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the word *atheist* was still reserved exclusively for polemic. The term *atheist* was an insult. No body would have dreamed of calling himself an atheist. *Atheism* was first used to describe a self-narrowed belief in late eighteenth century Europe, specifically denoting disbelief in the monotheistic Abrahamic God. In the 20th century, globalization contributed to the expansion of the term in western society to describe atheism as simply disbelief in God.

In 399 B.C., Socrates was accused of being an *atheist*, and after accusations, he was made to drink the poison hemlock. In ancient Greece, this was not indeed due to unbelief in a deity, but numerous deities that formed the Greek pantheon. Likewise in Rome, and elsewhere, like accusation was brought by the heathen populace against the Christians. In both cases, the real offence was not speculative *atheism* but rather the practical failure to acknowledge the gods of popular paganism, shown by neglect or refusal to join in their worship. Most recently, there has been a push in certain philosophical circles to redefine *atheism* as the "absence of belief" in its own right. This definition has become popular in *atheist* communities, though its mainstream usage has been limited.

3.3 Definition of Atheism

Scholars disagree how best to define and classify *atheism*, contesting what supernatural entities applies to; whether it is an assertion in its own right or merely the absence of one, and whether it requires a conscious, explicit rejection. Varieties of categories have been proposed, most of which treat *atheism* as "absence of belief in deities".

3.4 Problems of Definition

Some of the problems and controversy involved in defining atheism comes from difficulty in reaching a consensus for the definitions of words like deity and god. In the eighteenth century, this view has also fallen into disfavour as *atheism* has come to be understood as encompassing belief in any divinity. With respect to the range of phenomena being rejected, *atheism* may come after anything from the existence of a god, to the existence of any spiritual, supernatural or transcendental concepts, such as those of Hinduism and Buddhism.

Definitions of *atheism* also vary in the degree of consideration a person must put to the ideas of god to be considered an *atheist*. Minimally, *atheism* may be seen as the absence of belief in one or more gods. It has been argued that this broad definition includes new born and other people who have not being exposed to theistic ideas. Baron d'Holbach in 1772 said that "all children are born *atheists*; they have no idea of God". Also George H. Smith (1979) suggested that the man who is unacquainted with *atheism* is an *atheist*, because he does not believe in a god. Hence, Smith carried the then implicit *atheism* to refer to the absence of theistic belief without a conscious rejection of it, and explicit *atheism* to refer to the more common definitions of conscious disbelief. In like manner, categorizations has also been made about those who believes that there is no God, that God never existed in the past and does not exist now; and those other *atheists* who maintain that God once existed but it is now dead. God is dead they say (Omorege, 1993; 117).

3.5 Strong and Weak Atheism

Philosophers such as Anthony Flew and Michael Martin, have constructed strong (positive) *atheism* with weak (negative) *atheism*. Strong *atheism* is the explicit affirmation that gods do not exist. Weak *atheism* includes all other forms of non-theism. According to this categorization, anyone who is an *atheist* is either a weak or a strong *atheist*. The terms weak and strong are relatively recent; however, the equivalent terms positive and negative have being used in the philosophical literature, and in slightly different sense, by Catholic apologetics. Under this demarcation of *atheism*, most agnostics qualify as weak *atheists*.

While agnosticism can be seen as a form of weak *atheism*, most agnostic see their view as distinct from *atheism*, which they may consider no more justified than *theism* or requires an equal conviction. The supposed non-attainability of knowledge for or against the existence of gods is sometimes seen as indication that *atheism* requires a leap of faith. Common *atheist* responses to this argument include that unproven religious propositions deserve as much belief as all other unproven propositions and that the improvability of either is a possibility. Scottish philosopher, J.J.C Smart argues that sometimes a person who is really an *atheist* may describe himself, even passionately as an agnostic because of because of unreasonable generalized philosophical scepticism which would preclude us from saying that we know anything whatever, except perhaps the truth of mathematics and formal logic.

3.6 Anthropodicy

Anthropodicy epistemologically centres on man rather than on God. It is the explanatory sense that theodicy finds in God. For all created realities is now displaced by anthropodicy which finds that explanation in man. Hence it is the belief that what god is to the origin and meaning of the universe is now what man is. In a sense (to philosophers in this group), man becomes God and God becomes man.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Many unspoken philosophical bases that underpin science derive from *theistic* considerations. Its early practitioners saw nature as the handwork of almighty God, and themselves as exercising stewardship over the earth. Madhi Golsham puts forward the view that; if the application of philosophical enterprise is targeted towards the promotion of human happiness and welfare, philosophers need to regain a *theistic* perspective on their work.

5.0 SUMMARY

The origin and meaning of *atheism* was examined bearing in mind the etymology, definition and a short history of the word in English language usage.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Define atheism?
2. Trace the etymology of atheism?
3. Explain what is meant by the term. “Anthropodicy”?

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Barnes, Y. (1992). *The Ontological Argument*. London: Oxford University Press.

Chandler, H. (1993). "Some Ontological Arguments" *Faith and Philosophy,* Vol.10.

Omoregbe, J. (1980). "The Problem of Evil in the World" *West African Religion* Vol. XIX.

Oshitelu, G. A. (2003). *A Background to Christian Philosophy*, Lagos: Oputoru Publishers.

UNIT 4 ATHEISTIC THEORIES

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, a comprehensive study of the main atheistic theories propounded by scholars will be examined. It will be very difficult to classify these scholars as their writings cut across epistemological, metaphysical and anthropocentric areas of philosophy.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- explain the metaphysical atheistic theory
- explain the epistemological theory of atheism
- state the psychological, sociological and economic atheistic theory
- discuss the logical and evidential arguments
- relate the anthropocentric arguments
- state the atheistic theory of Sigmund Freud
- state the atheistic theory of Bertrand Russell.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Epistemological Atheistic Arguments

Epistemological atheism argues that people cannot know God or determine the existence of God. The foundation of epistemological atheism is agnosticism, which takes a variety of forms. In the philosophy of immanence, divinity is inseparable from the world

itself, including a person's mind, and each person's consciousness is locked in the subject. According to this form of agnosticism, this limitation in perspective prevents an objective inference from belief in God to assertions of his existence. The rationalistic agnosticism of Kant and the Enlightenment only accepts knowledge deduced with human rationality; this is a form of atheism. It holds that gods are not discernible as a matter of principle, and therefore cannot be known to exist. Scepticism, based on the ideas Hume, asserts that certainty about anything is impossible, so one can never know the existence of God. The allocation of agnosticism to atheism is disputed; it can also be regarded as an independent, basic world–view.

3.2 Metaphysical Atheistic Arguments

Metaphysical atheism is based on the view that reality is homogeneous and cannot be divided. Absolute metaphysical atheists subscribe to some form of physicalism; hence they explicitly deny the existence of non-physical beings. And if God cannot be visibly seen, hence, the does not exist. Relative metaphysical atheists maintain an implicit denial of a particular concept of God based on incongruity between their individual philosophies and attributes applied to God, such as transcendence, a personal aspect, or unity.

3.3 Psychological, Sociological and Economical Arguments

Philosophers such as Ludwig Feuerbach and Sigmund Freud argued that God and other religious beliefs are human inventions, created to fulfil various psychological and emotional wants and needs. This is also a view of many Buddhists. Karl Marx and Fries rich Engel, influenced by the work of Feuerbach, argued that belief in God and religion are social functions, used by those in power to oppress the working class.

According to Mikhail Baku in, "the idea of God implies the abdication of human reason and justice; it is the most decisive negation of human liberty, and necessarily ends in the enslavement of mankind, in theory and practice." He reversed Voltaire's famous aphorism that if God did not exist, it would be necessary to invent Him. Writing instead, he said "That if God really existed, it would be necessary to abolish him".

3.4 Logical and Evidential Arguments

Logical atheism holds the various conception of gods, such as the personal god of Christianity, are ascribed illogically in inconsistent qualities. Such atheists presents deductive arguments against the

existence of God, which assert the incompatibility between certain traits, such as perfection, creator status, immutability, omniscience, omnipresence, omnipotence, omni benevolence, transcendence, personhood, (a personal being), nonphysicality, justice and mercy. Theodicean atheists believe that the world as they experience it cannot be reconciled with qualities commonly ascribed to God by theologians. They argue that an omniscience, omnipotent and omni benevolent God is not compatible with a world where there is evil and suffering, and where divine love is hidden from many people. A similar argument is attributed to Sidd Mahatma, the founder of Buddhism.

Anthropocentric Arguments

Axiological or constructive atheism rejects the existence of gods in favour of a 'higher absolute' such as humanity. This form of atheism favours humanity as the absolute source of ethics and values, and permits individuals to resolve moral problems without resorting to God. Marx, Nietzsche, Freud, and Sartre all used this argument to convey message of liberation, full – development, and unfettered happiness. We shall briefly examine some of these theories.

3.6 Ludwig Feuerbach (1804 – 1872)

Ludwig Feuerbach wrote his epoch – making book: *Das wizen des christen Tums* (the Essence of Christianity) in 1841. The left – wing Hegelian wrote what would later provide great inspiration to Marx and Engels. He undertook a passionate, yet critically lucid reinterpretation of the Christian religion. Feuerbach systematically transformed theology into anthropodicy, and religion in to cultural philosophy. Feuerbach wanted to totally displace all realities as unachievable. To him, man replaces God, and anthropology replaces theology and psychological wishes replace religious representations. Man at the centre will now become the new object of worship. No longer God. What has caused the elevation of God over man (he believes) is that man saw himself incapacitated before the forces of natural and human power. So he turned to God in projecting his wishes and fears outward. Now, he believes, is the time to return man to his proper ideal place.

To him our acceptance of God basically has to do with our thinking and with our dissipating. We neither touch nor see nor taste God, but we do think of him. We are disposed toward him lending our wishes, servicing our needs to his being, but these thoughts and dispositions are precisely ours not God's. It is we who are thinking not God. We are God – tending beings. Our feeling and wishes toward him that is

why various people have various thought about God. Various people have various dispositions about God. It is never one for all. If there was God, there would have been at least basic unity in people's words and feelings and dispositions about God. At times, contradictions in human representations of God will make people go to war against one another for the same God. All in God's name.

Man's knowledge of God (and vice-versa) in its deepest roots, is man that is under discussion, not God. Thus each person and each people portray their knowledge of themselves in their knowledge of God as they know and experience Him. There is thus the next step. That it is the heart and soul of man that are functioning when it comes to God.

Religion involves two realities. The first is the revelation of man's intimate thoughts, which thought take wings in our religiosity they fly up. They become our religion. Secondly. There is the affective element in religiosity. Feuerbach calls it the confession of man's love secrets. Therein lays the mystery aspect of religion: that there are hidden, unsaid, unwritten and unknown realities that are covered by religion; these we protect jealously and revere, adore and serialize. Love is sacred. Intimacies are sacred, our hidden thoughts are sacred, that is our religion.

The summary of the thesis of Feuerbach is that religion is now to be replaced by social life, the church by politics, and prayer by work. Indeed the new religion, which is the future religion, is politics. Most importantly, it is no longer the hereafter but the here and now. Theologians must now convert to become anthropologists and true saints of future heaven must now become free self- confident citizens of this world.

Conclusively, the disappearance of God, heaven, and supra-natural events and beings is the rediscovery, salvation and elevation of man in the world. This is salvation. It is true religion. There lies proper "theism". Critically, unlike Feuerbach predicted, politics has not replaced religion, nor has anthropology become the religion of future humanity, on the contrary religion has continued to grow.

3.7Karl Marx (1818 – 1883)

With Feuerbach, Marx shared the thesis that religion because it positively negates the negation of the delimitation of man done by religion by reversing the roles of spirit and matter, Marx claimed that he turned Hegel upside down. To change the world and restore via action man's lost dignity; to dethrone the supernatural and restore the

material, the natural, it is to invert religion and institute economy and welfare. Indeed religion is both the product and the alienation of man. The basis of religious atheism is that man makes religion, religion does not make man. Religion is the self-consciousness and self-esteem of man who has either not yet found himself or has already lost himself again.

Considering the presence and participation of religion in the massive exploitation of the people of his days, Marx saw in religion the soothing role of the proletariat. The bourgeoisie exploited workers by seizing the surplus they have from their labour. The Churches preached a God of obedience and fear. The believer must submit to the capitalists. This therefore kept the masses in a continuous dehumanizing economic bondage. Indeed religion, instead of helping uplift man, the poor man, did diminish and dehumanize him. Religion was sedative, an opium. It was indeed the opium of the masses. For Marx, far from being reality, religion and the supernatural misrepresent truth and reality. It is a false metaphysics. As a matter of fact, all unique realities have to go through a dialectic process of evolution to higher qualities till all conflicts are resolved.

3.8Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900)

Friedrich Nietzsche was a son and grandson of Lutheran ministers, who read with intellectual, prophetic eyes, the decadence of Western civilization and the culture of his time. Morality was so low and Christianity was so caught up in worldliness that for Nietzsche it meant the death of God. The death of God has negative consequences for man and his society. Far from being an atheistic optimist, Nietzsche sees a formidable chain of destruction, breakdown, cataclysm and disaster casting a spell upon the world. Its long shadow is already hanging on us.

That shadow of religion in which nothingness is deified and in which the will to nothingness is sanctified must now be erased. Nietzsche believed that atheism is a form of nihilism exemplified by Christianity, which is a nihilistic religion. It must be replaced by something positive.

4.0CONCLUSION

On a critical note the historical refutation is the strongest if not a mortal shot on atheism, especially the Friedrich Nietzsche's clean models that put man as successor of God. The religion they tried to diminish has never been diminished, nor has it diminished on its own. Religiosity has never lessened, neither in intensity nor in its spread. Nietzsche perhaps was right to decry declining moral

standards. But to call that the death of God was an abuse of vocabulary.

5.0SUMMARY

In this unit, the various atheistic theories have been classified under the broad headings of epistemological, metaphysical, psychological, sociological, economical, logical and anthropocentric arguments.

6.0TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Explain briefly the atheistic theory of Feuerbach?
2. State briefly the atheistic theory of Karl Marx?
3. Has religion diminished as the atheists predicted? Discuss.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Chandler, H. (1993). "Some Ontological Arguments" *Faith and Philosophy,* Vol. 10.

Charlesworth, M. (1965). *Anselm's Pros Logion.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Oshitelu, G. A. (2003). *A Background to Christian Philosophy*, Lagos: Oputoru Publishers.

UNIT 5 RELIGION AND SCIENCE

CONTENTS

1.0INTRODUCTION

The conflict between religion and science seems irreconcilable, taking into consideration the critical manner of empirical evaluation of all things that forms the basis of scientific research and faith-based assertions of religion. It has often led to hot debates between theologians and scientists. It has led to the loss of faith in God by many. It is not unlikely to hear, of many who have professed faith in religion begin to backslide after they have been exposed to the scientific findings, especially when such are brought at par with the dictates of their religious beliefs. The biblical account of creation in six days while the theory of evolution has it that it took many millions of years before our planet came into existence and that the different creatures in the earth came to their present state through a long process of evolution is such an example. This seeming irreconcilable conflict will form the basis of our study in this unit.

2.0OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- understand the origin of conflict between science and religion
- understand the points of departure in both
- relate some of their differences and reasons for such conclusions
- state the limitations to science
- suggest means of bringing about meaningful relationship between them.

3.0MAIN CONTENT

3.1Origin of Conflict between Science and Religion

The Christian faith in very significant ways prepared the ground for the theory of evolution. (Langdon G.; 1972: 11). The Christian concept of creation provided the necessary foundations for the development of Western Science, of which Darwinism is certainly an important result. The Biblical view that time is both linear and irreversible, and therefore capable of cumulative development is perhaps the most critical of all the distant progenitors of the concepts of evolutionary theories of man's origin. Spread within a culture saturated with biblical concept of creation and providence.

Galileo

But from the time of the famous trial of Galileo whom Sean P.K (1987:28) says was reportedly lacking in tact to Darwin, the church took a bad name. Galileo was not only an arrogant and intolerant debater but he also took delight in humiliating his opponents and making men appear ridiculous. His intolerance forced the church authorities to make premature decision in circumstances which rendered a balanced judgment very difficult.

Charles Darwin

But the greatest shock was slammed on the Church by the discovery of Darwin on evolution. Before this discovery, few Churchmen, if any, ever doubted the accuracy of the Bible. The scripture was the "word of God" and could not be but true. All religious people accepted as true the accounts of creation, or the story of the flood, or the ages of the patriarchs. But the theory of evolution greatly affected all that. Everywhere there was consternation and dismay in the Church. They clergy as a whole tended to panic. They saw the ground cut from under their feet. The low ebb which theology had sunk made a cleavage inevitable between the old teaching and the new. Divisions quickly appeared between those who accepted the conclusions of the scientists. Many who believed the scientist and gave up the belief in creation also gave up belief in the creator. After all, it does not make much sense to talk of a creator if no creation took place. One of such victims was the hero of evolution, Charles Darwin himself.

Charles Darwin was a former candidate for the Holy orders, and he had come to see that the Old Testament, from its manifestly false history of the earth, and from its attributing to God a feeling of a

revengeful tyrant, was no more to be trusted than sacred books of the Hindus, or the belief of any barbarian.

The New Testament did not fare better, and he could indeed hardly see how anyone ought to wish Christianity to be true; for if so, the plain language of the text seems to show that the men who do not believe and this would include his father, brother and almost all his friends, will be everlastingly punished. And this is damnable doctrine.

The key to understand Darwin's thinking is his horror of the imposition of suffering on slaves by their masters or animals by men, and by the "clumsy, wasteful, blundering, low and horribly cruel works of nature" as seen in the suffering caused by parasites and in the delight in cruelty shown by some predators when catching and playing with their prey. If God is as almighty, omniscient and possessed of inexhaustible compassion as he is painted, it revolts our understanding to suppose that his benevolence is not unbounded. So Darwin became a reverent agnostic. With the outstanding achievement of his theory of evolution , there could be little doubt that it was manifestly false history of the earth in the Old Testament that have than any other cause turned him from being a candidate for the Holy Orders to "a reverent agonistic" (Enuku. A.A; 2003: 2).

3.2 Areas of Departure between Religion and Science

The period of the Enlightenment, of the eighteen century formed the bane of the most concerted effort to "rationalize" about the major doctrines of the Bible and hence brought it into head-on collision with science.

The Problem of Original Sin

The thinkers of the eighteenth century launched a direct attack on the doctrine of original sin; maintaining that it was false because it declared that human beings are by nature depraved and sinful, thus breeding and perpetuating all kinds of myths and superstitions about human nature. Instead of accepting the belief in human nature on the basis of the fall and original sin, which was the Church's explanation for the existence of evil and suffering in the world, rationalists such as Voltaire, Rousseau and Hume argued that humanity is by nature good or at least capable of becoming good. Indeed, human nature is so neutral that it could either be corrupted through wrong social indoctrination or be made good, gentle, loving and unwarlike through education and a good social environment.

Social thinkers of the enlightenment such as Rousseau even went as far as to teach that wickedness and evil in the world are as a result of social diseases, and of an unnatural lapse into social error through faulty reasoning. Thus, the sick and socially poisoned human society would be cured through education and the triumph of reason as men and women were taught how to become moral and enlightened (Manual 1965: 6-14).

The Authority of the Bible

Due to the great emphasis that the protestant reformation placed on the Bible as the final judge in matters of faith and doctrine, it was to be expected that scriptural authority would be challenged by the thinkers of the Enlightenment, since to them the Christian faith and its dogma had to prove themselves. Indeed, the Bible soon began to loose its authority and credibility as it became clear that certain Biblical accounts such as the creation stories, could not stand the test of reason, especially after the discoveries of Copernicus, Galileo and Newton had convincingly demonstrated that the earth was not the centre of the universe but revolved around the sun. In addition, the popularization of literary and historical criticism of the Bible by extreme anticlerical writers among the eighteenth century rationalists revealed discrepancies which, to the age of reason, proved that the Bible was after all not infallible but simply a book which had evolved over many centuries and which had been written by fallible human beings.

Accordingly, the Bible had to be treated like every other human document with no special claims to credibility except it expressed general religious ideas which could be recognized as universally valid and were shared by other religions of mankind. The effect of treating the Bible as an object of scientific study and not necessarily a sacred document in which God's word is encrypted was to strip it of its authority as a medium of divine revelation (Heron 1980: 5-6; Manual 1965: 10). This created a false impression that reason (scientific study) and Biblical authority is irreconcilable. It is to be noted that this controversy continues to date.

The Problems of Miracles

As the authenticity of the Holy Scriptures as a medium of divine revelation came under increasing attack and its authority appeared to crumble, some Christians tried to appeal to the miracles reported in the Bible to guarantee the truthfulness of its divine message. That is, miracles were cited as proof that God was at work in the history to which the Bible attests, in an attempt to demonstrate that God's hand

was behind its origins. However, the belief in miracles did not hold out for long and was likewise shaken to the core by scientific discoveries of laws of nature which regulated the natural order. Therefore, it became difficult for scientists to accept miracles or inferences with and suspension of those laws by some arbitrary God.

Some rationalists decided to opt for deism, which was an essentially scientific cosmology that took Newton's discoveries seriously by pointing out that the universe was governed by natural laws which rendered itself contained and self-explanatory. Whereas God was formerly understood to be exercising providential care in the world and in human affairs , deists now began to see God as a heavenly clock-maker who had put the world together like a clock but was no longer connected with it. Accordingly, it was no longer necessary for human beings who had "come of age" to turn to God for an explanation, because the self-explanatory world contained all that humans needed to know and this was discoverable by reason. This deistic understanding of the world gave impetus to the growing rationalistic reliance on reason. The result was scepticism about supernatural reality, which was seen as interfering with this worldly view of reality. At the same time it permitted the rationalists to both affirm the existence of God as necessary "first cause" and reject the possibility of miracles.

Time and Eternity

The widely held assumption amongst all theologians about time is its flowing nature. Today, eternity is no longer regarded as either timeless or unending time. Instead, God as eternal is the supra-temporal source of the world's temporality. The theological sense of science. Process theologians argue that the world is experienced by God through God's "consequent nature". Some also believe that God is eternally transcendence to and temporally immanent within the world. The future does not yet exist even for God, leaving God to create each instant of physical time. All of these views, while differing in important ways theologically, presuppose the nature of time's flow as based on both ordinary experience and classical physics. Einstein's theory of special relativity directly challenges all these views by undercutting the notion of a universal presence and the assumptions of uniform rate time's passage. According to Hartshorne, special relativity poses the most puzzling challenge of all to the classical theistic notion of a universal time flow. Clearly, the issue of "time and eternity" lies at the cutting edge of research in theology and science.

Divine Action

The relation between divine and natural occurrence of events also highlights challenges the twentieth-century science poses for the God-nature problem. Divine action underlies the entire scope of systematic theology, from creation to redemption and surface explicitly in discussions of special providence and miracles.

Traditionally, God gives the world its rational, intelligible structure as reflected in the laws of nature through the transcendent and eternal act of bringing the world as a whole into existence from nothing (*ex nihilo*). As immanent creator, God also continues to create (creation continua) and providently direct processes and events in general towards their consummation in the *eschaton.* In acts of special providence, God works through particular events and processes with special intentions. Hence, miracles are theological understanding of God's action- "what nature on its own" might be sufficient to cause. Following the rise of modern science and the Enlightenment, theological conservation and liberals split over the meaning of "special providence".

Creation and Cosmology

The Big Bang

Creation *ex nihilo* has been placed in relation to two particular features of the standard Big Bang cosmology, which represent the beginning of time, and the anthropomorphic principle which points to the striking correspondence between the fundamental physical constants and laws of nature and the evolution of life. Is the Big bang relevant to the Biblical doctrine of creation *ex nihilo?* Some say "yes", the scientific discovery of an absolute beginning of all things (including time) is empirical confirmation, or even proof of divine creation. Pope Pius XII – supported this in 1951, and also astronomer Robert Jastrow (1978).

Creation and Evolution

Christian theologians have developed a diversity of positive responses to Darwin's theory of evolution over the past 140years, which by and large assume that what science describes in terms of evolutionary biology is what theology sees as God's action in the world. Simply put, evolution is God's way of creating life, a view frequently called "theistic evolution". Scholars taking this approach typically employ concepts such as continuous creation (*creatio continua*).

Since the 1970s, scholars have argued that chance events, from genetic variation to environmental alterations, do not mitigate against God's creative purposes or point to a fundamental irrationality in the world. Instead, God is the ground and source of both chance and law, which together serve as God's means of continuously creating physical, chemical, and biological complicity in a world, thus characterized by continuity and emergence, temporality and opened-ended ness.
Arthur Peackoke likens God to an improviser of unsurpassed intelligence who gives birth to the world "within herself". Evolutionary biology also re-opens the question, of teleology. Can nature be given a limited teleological explanation while avoiding both purposelessness and a detailed pre-conceived design?

Theological Anthropology, Evolution and Neuroscience

How are we to think about human nature and origins, including the *imago dei* (image of God) and sin, in the light of evolutionary biology, socio biology, behavioural genetics, and neuroscience? But theologians have attempted to solve this problem by proposing that evolution is a development of matter towards spirit through God's continuous, immanent, and creative impulse in which nature becomes conscious of itself in humanity.

Another approach to theological anthropology starts with the Biblical concept of the human person as a "psychosomatic unity". Christian anthropology assumes the psychometric unity of the person "rooted in materiality", while the sciences should increase light on the multilevel, used character and evolutionary history of this unity. Theologically, anthropology also has much to gain from genetics research. Peters (1998a) discuses eight issues relating genetics to theological assumptions about God, evolution, and the human person. These included genetic discrimination, an intensification of the abortion controversy, patenting and cloning, genetic determinism, and human freedom, the "gay gene" somatic versus germ-line intervention and "playing God". With Philip Hefner, he understands humanity as a created co-creator. As humans, we cannot but be creative. The ethical challenge comes in aligning our efforts with the future God is creating.

Redemption, Evolution and Cosmology

The point of departure for most theologies is that God shares in the suffering of the world and heals us through Christ. But this raises fundamental questions: does nature need to be redeemed? What is God's relation to natural evil (the problem of theodicy)? What is the

relation between sin, biological death and redemption? Does redemption merely include life on earth, or the universe as a whole? Responses can be divided into the views that human sin as a radically new phenomenon with no roots in our evolutionary past and the view that human sin as emerging within human evolution from a variety of preconditions that fade back indefinitely into the past.

The relevance of Christology to evolution depends on whether nature needs redemption. Holmes Rolston writes, "Whatever is in travail needs redemption, whether or not there is any sin to be dealt with". Christ is the product of God's immanent activity in all of evolutionary history, and yet he is radically new revelation of God's nature. A defining theme for most Christian theologies is the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. How is this miracle to be put in relation to science? Peacock (1993b) and Polikinghorne (1996b) offer differing responses that illustrate the consequences of prioritizing either theology or science. Here both agree that the resurrection is more than mere psychology, yet Polkinghorne is more committed to an "empty tomb" the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth also bears in the question of life after death and general resurrection. Resurrection is not the reunion of resurrected body with an "immortal soul" – a primarily Greek concept, but rather the eschatological transformation of the complete person as a psychometric unity.

Evolution also poses the problem of theodicy, given the billions of years of natural disaster, evolutionary wastefulness, suffering, death and extinction in nature. Here, the conditions for the evolution of free creatures hinge on nature. God does not intervene, but grants the world and humans independence. (Russell; 1990).

We come now to the doctrine of "last things" or eschatology. Some scholars, such as Reuther, discuss eschatology primarily in the context of ecology and liberation. According to Reuther, the biblical view of eschatology, with its incorporation of the Hebraic view at earthly blessedness, was replaced by earthly power in the early church. The new earth is the new heaven in which God is identified with the culmination of the human struggle for meaning.

3.3 An Interaction Model for Religion and Science

A major challenge continues to be whether science and theology can genuinely interact in a mutually constructive way, each offering something of intellectual value to the other. J.T. Russell (1998:13) has identified eight distinct ways in which this interaction can take

place, five involving the influence of science on religion. Limiting our discussions to physics and cosmology, the first five ways are:

1. Physical theories can act as data which place constraints on theology. For example, a theology of divine action should not violate special relativity.
2. Physical theories can act as data to be incorporated into theology. The Big Bang cosmology can be explained via creation *ex nihilo*: the explanation though, is that of theology and not of science.
3. Theories in physics after philosophical analysis can act indirectly as data in theology.
4. Theories in physics can act indirectly as theological data when they are incorporated into a fully articulated philosophy of nature, such as temporality in process philosophy.
5. Theories in physics can function heuristically in the theological context of discovery by providing conceptual, experiential moral and aesthetic inspiration. Theology can also influence physics in the following ways.

6. Theology has provided key historical assumptions which underlay the development of science such as the contingency and rationality of nature. These deserve a renewed appraisal.
7. Theological theories can act as a source of inspiration in the scientific "context of discovery". An example is the influence of religious ideas on the pioneers of a quantum theory, including Planck, Einstein, Bohrand Schrödinger.
8. Theological theories could provide criteria, alongside empirical adequacy, coherence, scope, and fertility, for theory choice in physics.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The historical study of the interaction between science and religion is rapidly expanding. Careful historical research has thoroughly discredited the claim that the relation between science and religion throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was solely one of warfare. Claude Welch (1996; 1985; 208) shows that there were at least three kinds of response to science in the nineteenth century; in addition to "opposition", there was cautious mediation or "accommodation". Historical research into the religious origins of modern science is suggesting an increasing complex interplay of factors at work in the historical relations between science and religion.

5.0 SUMMARY

A study of the origin of relationship between science and religion, their areas of disagreement and harmony has been examined. In conclusion, an attempt is made to foster a more meaningful relationship between science and religion.

6.0TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. What is the objection of science to miracles?
2. Does the big bang theory portend any difficulty to the Biblical narrative on creation? Explain.
3. How can the resurrection of Jesus be explained scientifically?

7.0REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Heron, W. (1980). *The Place of God in Creation.* London: Oxford University Press.

Owen, R. Jones. (1968). "Philosophical Reflections on creation". *In science and Religion* in G. Barbour (ed.) London: SCM Press Ltd.

Encyclopaedia Britannica, Vol. 5.

Sean, P. Kealy. (1987). *Science and the Bible*. Ireland: The Columbia Press.

Eruku, N. A. (2003). "A Comparative Study of the Biblical Accounts of Creation and the Scientific Theory of Evolution" in *Religion and Science and Culture*, P. A. Dopamu and E. Ade. Odumuyiwa (eds.) Ilorin: NASR.

MODULE 3 RELIGION AND CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

UNIT 1 THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The fact cannot be denied that Nigeria, a country "blessed with immense resources" as has been referred to, times without number, is (paradoxically of course) plagued with innumerable ills, social, economic, political, mental and otherwise. These ills are exemplification of the evils which humans experience in the world.

The reality of this situation constitutes enough evidence for adherents of Jainism to hold tenaciously that this world inevitability means suffering. While this may be an overstatement it is nonetheless doubtful if the description of these ills as mere *private boni* as opined by St. Augustine in his *Contrast* is an accurate representations of the state of affairs. Theodicy is an accurate representation of the state of affairs. Wikipedia Encyclopedia has it that this theodicy scarcely attracts applause from many people, theologians inclusive (2006). Of course, so many solutions have been advanced to justify the presence of evil in a world created by a good omnipotent and omniscient God, without making "sacrilegious" statements about God. But as opined by Mackie, none of the proposed solutions of the problem of evil has withstood the test criticism. There is no valid solution of the problem which does not modify at least one of the constituent proportions in a way which would seriously affect the essential core of the theistic position. The riddle is this: is the reality of a good God compatible with the "real presence" of something antithetical to him, namely, evil? In his well known novel, *The Plague,* Albert Camus makes it clear that the main reason why he does not believe in God is the impossibility of reconciling the existence of an infinite good and omnipotent God with the stark reality of evil in the world supposedly created by him.

2.0OBJECTIVES

By the end of this study, you should be able to:

- know the philosophical explanation for the existence of evil in the world
- understand the religious explanations for the existence of evil
- embark on an assessment of the problem of evil in the world.

3.0MAIN CONTENT

3.1Why is there evil in the world?

> *"Since the order of the world is ruled by death, may it not be better perhaps, for God, if we do not believe in him and fight with all our strength against death without lifting up Our eyes towards heaven where he sits in silence.*

The problem of evil (or as sometimes called, the problem of theodicy) in the world has been a long puzzle to the human mind. If God exists and he is infinitely good and powerful, and if this world was actually created by him, it is impossible to understand why there

could be so much evil in it. Epicurus, long ago, put this problem in the form of a dilemma: is God able to prevent evil in the world and is unwilling to do so? Then he is not infinitely good; on the contrary he is malevolent. Is he willing to prevent evil but is unable to do so? Then, he is not omnipotent but he is on the contrary impotent. But if he is both omnipotent and infinitely good why is there evil in the world created by him?

3.2 Philosophical Explanations for Evil

Stoicism

Stoicism is a philosophical school founded by Zeno around the third century B.C. It flourished to the first few centuries of the Christian era. The doctrine of this school had tremendous influence on people's attitude towards life for many centuries. Its world view is pantheistic. God and the universe is, according to the school, one and the same thing. God is the soul of the universe, while the universe itself is the body of God, both constitute one entity, and all things are parts of this entity.

It is believed by the stoics that the universe is strictly governed by rigid laws of nature emanating from God. The whole universe is a well-ordered and harmonious system in which everything plays a useful role. Nothing in the world is useless, and nothing happens by chance. For everything has been carefully planned from eternity by God and is regulated by the fixed laws of nature. Therefore, whatever happens does so in accordance with the laws, of nature and is of the overall plan of the universe.

All events in the universe have been ordained to happen as part of the system and play a useful role with him in the universe system. Event that we call evil is an integral put of the eternal plan, an integral part of the system and contribute towards the order and harmony of the universal system. So nothing should be seen in the micro sense, but in a holistic manner. Good and evil are useful and complimentary. This means that even evil too is useful, if it is part of the universal plan and it makes its own contributions towards the order and harmony of the universe, in a accordance with the laws of nature. It follows from this pantheistic and deterministic worldview of the stoics that there's really no evil in the world since every thing is part of God and every event is part of the ways in which God orders the world through the laws of nature. We call certain things evil because we do not understand how they contribute towards the order and harmony of the universal system. We do not understand

how they fit into the eternal plan of God. In reality nothing is evil or useless.

Plotinus and St. Augustine

Plotinus, the founder, of the neo-platonic school, and St. Augustine both conceived evil in negative terms. This negative view derives from metaphysics, according to which all beings alternately derived from the transcendent deity which he calls the "One". The "One" is absolutely transcendent and is the ultimate source being. It is also the ultimate source of light, for both light and being derive from the "One". Everything in the universe emanated ultimately from it. The first being to emanate from it (and the only being to emanate directly from it) is also a divine being which Plotinus calls *Nous* (which means mind or spirit). From the *Nous* another divine being, the world soul, also emanated.

The world soul has two aspects, namely, the inner and the outer or the higher and the lower aspects. The lower aspect is Nature and it is from this part of the world soul that the material universe emanated. Matter is at the lowest level in the process of emanation. Consequently, matter is at the lowest level of being and of light hence it lacks being and light. This very lack of being is what evil is. For evil is the lack of being and matters evil and darkness. Evil is thus not a positive thing, it is not an entity, but the privation of being, the absence of being, and the lack of being. As long as we are in the material world, and attached to material things, we cannot avoid experiencing evil. Plotinus, therefore recommended self-detachment from material things through asceticism and contemplation so that the soul can frequently elevate itself from the material world into the spiritual world. Plotinus philosophy is on the whole, a mystical philosophy. He was himself a mystic who frequently had ecstatic experiences. Evil comes from attachment to material things and the more we detach ourselves from them the less evil we experience.

In like manner, St. Augustine belonged to the neo-platonic school of philosophy. He was for a long time disturbed by the problem of evil in the world. He couldn't understand how there could be such evil in a world created by God, or where evil are from. Since God is infinitely good he could not have created evil. What then is the source of evil? Who created it? The Manicheans greatly influenced the conclusion of St. Augustine in approaching this problem. The Manichean School was founded by Manes in the third century of the Christian era. They had a dualistic approach to the problem, of evil. They postulated two ultimate principles in reality. These are the principle of good (*Ormuzd*) and the principle of evil (*Ahriman*) and

these are the two ultimate sources of all things. *Ormuzd* is the source of all good things while *Ahriman* is the source of all bad things. *Ormuzd* is the source of spiritual things and of light, while *Ahriman* (the principle of evil) is the source of darkness and of all material things, for matter is evil. In the human person, the soul came from *Ormuzd*, the principle of good while the body came from the evil principle *Ahriman*. These two ultimate principles are divine and eternal. They are in an eternal conflict with each other and this conflict extends to the things that came from them, hence good and evil, light and darkness, spirit and matter are in perpetual conflict with each other.

Attracted by this philosophy, St. Augustine joined the Manichean school and adopted their explanation of evil. But he later found it unsatisfactory. Having read the works of Plotinus, he rejected the Manichean explanation of Plotinus that evil is not a positive thing; evil is not something positive, but simply the negation of being, or in other words the absence of being, the lack of being. Every positive thing was created by God, for God is the creator of all things and whatever he created is good, God did not create any bad thing. Matter itself was created by God and it is therefore good.

Augustine thus disagreed with Plotinus who held that matter was evil. As a Christian, Augustine had to differ from Plotinus on this point and could not go along with him to affirm that matter is evil since matter was created by God the creator of all things. Since evil is not a positive thing, but only negation of being, it does not make sense to ask who created it. For evil was not created and could not be created. Nor can it exist on its own since it is not a being. Only substances can and do exist in their own and they are all good because they were all created by God from the above. It follows that nothing can be completely evil. A thing can only be partially evil. Since evil is the lack being, and nothing can completely lack of being and still remain in existence. As regards moral evil, Augustine says it is the product of man's misuse of his free will. Moral evil cannot be traced to any other source beyond the misuse of man's free will. Thus, when a man misuses his free will by making and evil choice, he becomes the source of moral evil. This conclusion, of St. Augustine greatly influenced many philosophic ideas and we shall take this as our reference point on the philosophical approach to the problem of evil in the world.

3.3 Religious Explanations of Evil

Islam

Islamic theology sees the problem of evil in the world from the viewpoint of the absolute power and sovereignty of God, who has the whole universe and everything in it under his sovereign control. Islam thus emphasizes the absolute power of and sovereignty of God and man's duty to submit unconditionally to the will of God, following the example of Abraham, since God is the absolute creator and the lord of the universe everything is under his control, nothing is outside his control.

What we call evil must be part of God's purpose in the universe, and it must have a positive role in the scheme of things according to God's plan. Suffering can be seen by man as an opportunity to demonstrate his unshakable faith in God and an unconditional submission to him. Suffering can be a punishment for sin, but it can also be a test of one's faith in God. Hence, suffering should be endured with patience and total submission to the will of Allah. On the other hand everything possible should be done to alleviate suffering, for example, by alms-giving. Thus, according to Islam, God allows people to suffer either to punish them for their sin or to test their faith in him. In either case it should be endured with patience and total submission.

African Traditional Religion

African Traditional Religion believes that there is only one God who is the absolute creator, owner and ruler of all things, and the father of all mankind. There are two worlds, namely, the physical world of mortal men and the world of the spirits. There is interaction between these two worlds, for those in the physical World (mortal men) pray to those in the world of the spirits for help and protection, while those in the world of the spirits help and protect those in the physical world. The world of the spirit is inhabited by God, the deities or divinities, the ancestors and spirits in a hierarchical order. Thus, African Traditional Religion believes in the existence of deities or divinities that functions as ministers of God and they are subordinate to him. God is conceived like a Monarch, an absolute Monarch surrounded by his chiefs (gods) who are at his service.

God wants all men to do good and eschew evil. He does not condone evil for he punishes every evil sooner or later. Whether done in public or private. The concept of causality is central to African Traditional Religion. Every event has a cause. Hence any evil or misfortune that afflicts man must also have a cause. To find out the cause a diviner must be employed. Quite often, evil is traced to a supernatural cause and is seen as a punishment from God (usually through one of his agents) for an offence committed either in this life or one's previous life. Evil is always seen as a punishment for an

offence. The idea of a completely innocent man suffering misfortune for no particular reason is foreign to African Traditional Religion.

Judaism and Christianity

The Jews at first attributed evil to God and held that evil was sent by God to guilty people as punishment for their sins. Thus, God told David after he had sinned "Behold, I shall raise up evil against you out of your own house." God was therefore the source of evil. But eventually, they later came to attribute evil to Satan". This Satan was at first conceived as a messenger and servant of God, but gradually it became almost a rival of God to himself. This mythical personage, conceived as the source of evil, persisted in the New Testament period and was frequently alluded to by Christ.

Christian theology explains evil in the light of the suffering and death of Jesus Christ. Jesus suffered much evil but it was turned into good by God, for Christ's suffering and death culminated in his glorification and salvation for mankind. Similarly, God will also, in the final analysis, turn into good the evil that now plagues mankind. It is because he knows that he is later going to turn it into good that God permits evil in this world.

3.3 Evaluation of the Problem

Scholars have argued that none of the various religious and philosophical explanations of evil given above is satisfactory. If the stoic worldview is accepted, their view seems to follow, but no argument or logic compels one to accept their pantheistic metaphysics as the correct portrait of reality. Plotinus and Augustine's view of evil as a negation of being is an understatement. Evil is certainly more than the negation of being, for there is much more to evil than a mere negation.

The Judaic and Islamic view that God uses evil to test people's faith in him is anthropomorphic. If God is omniscient then he should know whether or not an individual has faith in him. He does not need to test anybody in order to know him. The view that evil is punishment for sin cannot stand the test of the suffering of innocent children. What offence have innocent babies committed that they should be made to suffer so much punishment? Hinduism, Buddhism and African traditional Religion would say, of course, that such children are being punished for the offence they committed in their previous existence. Also, the Christian doctrine that God permits evil in order to turn it into good in the end is inconsistent with God's omnipotence, for it presupposes that it is only via evil that God can bring about good.

4.0CONCLUSION

It can be ascertained from the fore-going that the problem of evil is the product of anthropomorphic conception of God. When God is conceived anthropomorphically as an infinitely loving and all powerful father, the problem then arises as to why the world is to be afflicted with so much evil when he could have prevented it since he is all powerful. The idea of an infinitely good, loving and omnipotent father is irreconcilable with the presence of evil in the world. What the fact of evil in the world shows is that the anthropomorphic God of religion is only a figment of man's imagination, the anthropomorphic God is no other than an imaginary father made in the image and likeness of man. God is totally different from what he is conceived to be in religion.

5.0SUMMARY

In this study the problem of evil was examined as it holds sway in relation to theistic arguments. This unit discussed the idea of evil in philosophy and religion before arriving at a critical conclusion.

6.0TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. How can you describe evil?
2. Is the religious explanation for evil in the world satisfactory?
3. Is it true?
4. Explain how the stoics view evil in the world?

7.0REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Heron, W. (1980). *The Place of God in Creation.* London: Oxford University Press.

Owen, R. Jones. (1968). "Philosophical Reflections on creation". *In science and Religion* in G. Barbour (ed.) London: SCM Press Ltd.

Encyclopaedia Britannica, Vol. 5.

Sean, P. Kealy. (1987). *Science and the Bible*. Ireland: The Columbia Press.

Eruku, N. A. (2003). “A Comparative Study of the Biblical Accounts of Creation and the Scientific Theory of Evolution” in *Religion and Science and Culture*, P. A. Dopamu and E. Ade. Odumuyiwa (eds.) Ilorin: NASR.

UNIT 2 LIFE AFTER DEATH

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Philosophers have engaged themselves in vigorous arguments for and against the concept of immortality of the soul. Some philosophers have argued for the immortality of the soul, some simply assumed it while others argued against it.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this study, you should be able to:

- explain the meaning of immortality
- discus the arguments for immortality
- state the arguments against immortality of the soul.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Arguments for the Immortality of the Soul

Plato

Plato advanced six arguments for the immortality of the soul. This will be examined one after the other:

Contraries are Followed by Contraries

According to the argument, contraries produce contraries and therefore are followed by contraries. For example, light is followed by darkness, while darkness, in turn is followed by light. Strength is followed by weariness and vice versa, the state of being asleep is followed by the state of being awake and vice versa. Now, life and death are contraries like light and darkness, and since life is followed

by death it is only expected that death in turn will be followed by life. This shows there is life after death. But can this be guaranteed?

Immortality of the Soul

The assumption in the second argument is that the human soul has been in existence even before it has taken abode in the human body. Then it follows that it can also continue to exist after its separation from the body at death. If the soul exists prior to its union with the body, then it means that it does not depend on the body for its existence. Its separation from the body (at death) will therefore not mean the end of its existence. Hence, to him, it was in its life in the other world that the human soul is able to know the absolute goodness, and brought the knowledge of absolute goodness to this world. The same applies to mathematical truth. A boy who has not been taught mathematics can when questioned, show evidence of the knowledge of mathematical truths. How did he come to know these mathematical truths without having been taught? The soul of the boy brought it along from the other world, where it existed prior to its union with the body.

This argument has two loopholes in it. The first is that if it is true that certain things are known that are beyond sense perception, it does not follow that such knowledge was brought by the soul from another world. It could be acquired by intuitions, and it is unnecessary to postulate the pre-existence of the soul as an explanation. Secondly even if it were shown that the soul pre existed prior to its union with the body, it does not follow that it will continue to exist after its separation from the body at death. Its contact with the body through its union with it, could have such adverse effect on it that it would no longer continue to be what it was prior to this union.

The Forms

Plato believes that the soul is able to know the forms and they are immortal, eternal, immutable and indestructible realities. Since the soul is able to know them, it means it is able to come in to contact with them and grasp them. To be able to do this, the soul must be of the same nature as these forms, this means that the soul too like the forms, is immaterial, eternal, immutable and indestructible. In other words the soul is immortal.

This argument prepossess that the forms are immaterial, immutable and eternal and real entities actually existing somewhere. But this is an assumption which cannot be proved and which only a Platonist believes.

Soul is a Principle of Life

As a principle of life, the soul participates in the form of life. And thus it cannot at the same time admit the contrary (death). In other words, since the soul is a participant in the form of life it cannot at the same time admit the contrary form (the form of death)! Which means the soul cannot die. This argument is also based on the belief in the actual existence of the forms as real realities.

Inherent evil

Plato says that something can only be destroyed or perished by its own inherent internal evil. But the evils of the soul like injustice, intemperance, cowardice and ignorance do not destroy the soul. An unjust man, for example could live longer than a just man. Since the soul is not destroyed by its own merits inherent in it, it would be unreasonable to suppose that it could be destroyed by eternal evils. This argument is very unconvincing. The very first premise, that is, that something can only be destroyed by internal evil inherent in it and not by evils that are external of it is an unproven assumption. There is no reason why a thing cannot be destroyed by evil external to its nature.

Argument of Motion

Plato says a thing that moves by the action of something else ceases to exist any time other thing which moves it ceases to do so. But the soul is a self moving principle which does not depend on the action of any other thing. This means that as a self- moving principle, the soul is uncreated and as such it is indestructible, and immortal. This argument can only apply to God and not to the human soul, it therefore only show the immortality of God and not that of the individual human soul.

St. Augustine (354 – 430 AD)

The soul according to him is the very essence of man, hence he defines a man as a rational soul using a mortal and earthly body when a man acquires knowledge, it is the soul that uses the body as an instrument to acquire the knowledge which is superior to the body and cannot be acted upon by the body. Augustine advances these platonic arguments for the immortality of the soul.

Immanence from God

For Augustine, God alone is the principle of life since he alone is the source of life .He then modifies Plato's theory by saying that the soul participates in life and its very being and essence form the principle of life (i.e. God). Since God, the principle of life cannot admit the contrary principle, (i.e. death) and what the soul derives from God is precisely life itself, it follows that the soul too cannot admit the opposite (death). This means that the soul is by its very nature immortal, it cannot admit death.

The Doctrine of Forms

This is also based on Plato's argument of forms. The forms for Augustine are eternal, immutable and indestructible truths which are objects of human knowledge. When the soul acquires knowledge it is these eternal truths that it apprehends. The fact that the soul is able to come into contact with, and apprehends, these truths shows that it shares the same nature with them that is eternal, immaterial and indestructible. This means that it is immortal.

Desire for Happiness

Natural desire for happiness is a natural desire that is common to all men. Since this desire is natural in men, then perfect happiness must be attainable otherwise man would not have a natural and irresistible desire for it. It is however not attainable in this life (for no man is ever perfectly happy in this life) it follows then that it is after death that it is attainable since it is not attainable now, in this life. It means that there must be life after death.

This argument is unconvincing. There is no guarantee that perfect happiness is ever possible or attainable by man. The fact that a man has a natural desire for it does not make it a reality.

Rene Descartes (1596 – 1650)

Without explicitly trying to prove the immortality of the soul, Descartes' concept of man implies it. For him, man is essentially mind, and mind is an immaterial substance characterized by thought. He conceives man as mind (or soul) that happens to have a body but which is not an essential part of his nature. Descartes concept of man is thus platonic and it implies the immortality of the soul. For if, as he says, the mind (soul) is an immaterial substance, it follows that it is spiritual and immortal.

Emmanuel Kant (1724 – 1804)

He maintains that the immortality of the soul cannot be proved with speculative or metaphysical arguments. He believes that a moral argument is more convincing than a metaphysical argument and he, accordingly, advances a moral argument in favour of the immortality of the soul. This argument is based on man's obligation obey the moral law.

Man, Kant says, has an obligation to conform his will completely to the moral law. Such a complete conforming would be holiness. For, a will that is completely conformed to the moral law is a holy will, for the moral law is a holy will. The moral law obliges man to strive for such a complete conformity, but it is unattainable in this life. Holiness is a perfection which nobody ever attains in this life. But the fact that the moral law obliges man to strive for it shows that it is in principle attainable. Since it is not attainable in this life we have to assume that it is attainable after death, and therefore that there is life after death, where the strife towards it will continue. For the progress towards it will continue, perfection is an infinite one which does not end at death.

Kant does not consider this argument as a proof of the immortality of the soul; rather, he calls it a postulation of practical reason, that is, something that practical reason (morality) leads us to assume. Kant is, in other words, telling us that morality leads us to assume the immortality of the soul. But this argument is no more convincing than those of other philosophers. If the progress towards moral perfection is an infinite one, as Kant says, then it is unattainable by finite man and in that case the moral law would not oblige man to strive for it.

3.2 Argument against Immortality of the Soul

Aristotle (384 – 322 B.C)

Aristotle implicitly denies immortality by his concept of man. His concept of a man makes no room for personal immortality. Man according to him, is a personified composite body and soul, none of which can exist separately without the other. Both are essential and complementary elements of the human person. The union between the body and the soul is a substantial union not accidental union as Plato and his followers say.

Applying his hylermorphic doctrine of matter and form to immortality, Aristotle maintains that the soul is the form while the body is matter. These two elements (matter and from) are mutually dependent and inseparable, for there can be no matter without form neither can there be form without matter. This thus rules out the possibility of the soul existing after death without the body.

There is however, evidence of Aristotle in *De Anima* that he believed in the immortality of a soul. In an obscure passage in his book, Aristotle speaks of Active Intellect as a kind of cosmic Divine Intellectual, distinct from the passive intellect which is the intellect of the individual man. He describes the Active intellectual as eternal and immortal. This active, cosmic intellect, it seems, enters with the mind of the individual man and enables it to think and perform. That is why Aristotle says that without it nothing thinks.

Epicurus (341 – 270 B.C)

Epicurus explicitly teaches that there is no life after death. His materialistic world view makes no room for the immortality of the soul. Everything in reality is, according to Epicurus, made up of atoms. This includes human souls and even the gods – they are all composed of atoms. Epicurus rejects the idea that the soul is an incorporeal substance. The soul, he contends, is a material substance, made of atoms. For there can be no such thing as immaterial substance existing separately. Since the soul is a material substance it dissolves at death and perishes with the body.

The soul is the principle of sensation and when a man dies, a sensation lapses because the soul is dissolved and dispersed. For this reason, there is no need for anybody to be afraid of punishment after death since there is no life after death. Death is the end of sensation and of life. There is no need therefore to be afraid of death for death is nothing to us, it is not something to be afraid of. When this doctrine of his is correctly understood, Epicurus says, it would help man live a happy life by removing from life the obstacle to happiness, mainly, the fear of death: for death causes no pain and gives no trouble when it comes, why then should one be afraid of it.

David Hume (1711 – 1776)

Hume's conception of man implies a denial of any entity in man called soul, distinct from the series of perceptions. The self is no more than the series of perceptions. Hume seems to imply that these psychological experiences or series of perceptions are without a subject. He believes the question of the soul cannot be discussed since we do not perceive it, nor do we perceive that our psychological experiences come from a common subject, be it material or immaterial. Hume does not seem to realize that the idea of a series of perceptions without a subject is in itself intelligible. How can we talk of a series of psychological experiences without a subject which undergoes these experiences? Every experience presupposes a subject, and in the case of

psychological experience the subject is itself not an object of perception. But does that not mean that the experience is without a subject?

Wittgenstein has rightly pointed out that ego cannot be the object of its own experience just as the eye cannot be an object of its own sight. The eye cannot see itself; the photographic camera cannot include itself in its picture; it cannot picture itself, yet pictures come from it just as vision necessarily comes from an eye, picture comes from a photographic camera, so does experience necessarily comes from a subject, an ego or 'self" is what is called the soul.

Bertrand Russell (1872 – 1970)

Russell explicitly denies the possibility of life after death. Like, Hume, he also denies the reality of the soul as a substance distinct from the bodily organs and which could be contrasted from the body. There is no such entity in man. This belief, Russell says, is false because just as the body continually changes by the process of nutriment and wastage so does the mind. It is only in appearance that man continues to have the same body, but in reality there is no continuity of the human body, so that a man does not continue to have the same body for any length of time. The continuity of a human's body is a matter of appearance and behaviour, not an entity but a series of experiences.

What we call the mind or soul is, according to Russell, no more than a series of experiences preserved through memory and habit which are bound up with the structure of the brain. When the brain is destroyed at death, memory and habit are also destroyed with it, for they are inseparably bound with it. There can be no memory without the brain.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The problem of immortality of the soul is one of the many life's mysteries that remain an eternal puzzle unto man. Attempts by philosophy, science and religion not yielded much fruit and it appears that these puzzles will remain with humanity for ever.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have basically restricted ourselves to argument for and against immortality of the soul. These arguments are many, ranging from Plato to Russell, but none can be acclaimed to have decisively done justice to the problem of immortality of the soul.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. State any three argument of Plato for the immortality of the soul?

2. Clearly explain Kant's moral argument for the immortality of the soul.
3. How does Aristotle's concept of man imply that there can be no life after death?

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Heron, W. (1980). *The Place of God in Creation.* London: Oxford University Press.

Owen, R. Jones. (1968). "Philosophical Reflections on creation". *In science and Religion* in G. Barbour (ed.) London: SCM Press Ltd.

Encyclopaedia Britannica, Vol. 5.

Sean, P. Kealy. (1987). *Science and the Bible*. Ireland: The Columbia Press.

UNIT 3 THE QUEST FOR HISTORICAL JESUS

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

During the first half of the twentieth century Karl Barth and Rudolf Bultmann (including Brunner, Tillich, the Niebur brothers, and others), dominated the theological scene in continental Europe and the rest of the western world. These men had built up theological systems which were representative of the mainstream protestant thought in the twentieth century. During the 1960s, however, new developments began to challenge the dominance of these theological systems which had developed in reaction to nineteenth-century liberal theology. Theology and the church were entering a new age which the old theological formulations had no answers. New social problems arose, and the theological giants of the first half of the twentieth century had not death with them, because these problems had not existed in their own time. The new quest for historical Jesus formed one of the numerous questions that theologians of the later half of the twentieth century had to deal with.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- define what is meant by the term 'historical Jesus'
- explain the origin of the problem it posses
- discuss the contribution of scholars in solving the problem
- relate the possible suggestions in tackling future contemporary problems facing the Christian faith.

3.0MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Origin of the Problem of Historical Jesus

Vast progress in natural science and technology led to an expectation that the end of the twentieth century would be a time of unprecedented comfort, ease and pleasure. On the other hand, increasing contacts between West and the third World made Western theologians aware of the poverty and misery of the underdeveloped countries. Increased speed of travel and ease of communication enable people to realize that, in many ways, the people of the world were facing similar problems and dangers. Tension between the rich and poor became greater, the problems of pollution of the environment seemed ever more urgent, the population explosion was perceived as a problem unique to the twentieth century, many nations were confronted with the horror of wide spread famine and an inability to feed their people; and terrorism was becoming, for the first time, a constant feature of modern life.

These and similar problems were accompanied by increasing secularization as the thought and action of the so-called Christian West were less and less influenced by the gospel. The church became less influential in the society. Western people became less and less interested in God and religion as they attempted to have their lives and destiny of the human race in their own hands. As time passed, problems were approached from an increasingly scientific and technological point of view, and the people were less inclined to turn to God for answers. It was these developments which forced the church to reflect on its faith and which compelled it to seek new answers from the gospel. Answers were demanded to questions such as: is the church as we know it still needed and is its message relevant to the enormous problems that humanity faces in the second half of the twentieth century? Does the word 'God' mean anything, or is it just a noise that we make when we don't know what we are talking about? Does Jesus of Nazareth and his massage of God's kingdom have any unique contribution to offer to modern society? Does "faith" or liberation in Jesus mean anything more than an unimportant spiritual and transitional phase on the way to the "real" life here-after? Is it true that our present life falls outside God's sphere of interest?

Is it true that the gospel is given simply to prepare us for eternity? Is it true that God's justice, righteousness, love and peace have no relevance to this life? In the face of these vexing questions, a feeling on uncertainty arose about the theological formulations of Barth, Bultman, Tillich and others. As people found their theological systems inadequate, new theological answers had to be formulated if the Christian faith were not to be dismissed as antiquated and irrelevant to

our contemporary situation. To these new theological formulations, (which the quest for historical Jesus formed one of its bases) we shall now turn.

3.2 The New Quest for Historical Jesus (Bultmann's Theology)

The new quest for historical Jesus has to be seen as a direct reaction to Bultmann's theological program in which he, in agreement with nineteenth century-scholarship, argued that the question whether Jesus of Nazareth considered himself to be Messiah is, from the historical point of view, irrelevant to the Christian faith's 'acknowledgement' of Jesus as the one in whom God's word decisively encounters "human beings". Bultmann said that it was the church, not Jesus himself, who asserted that Jesus was the Messiah. Bultmann thought that the results of historico-critical research have demonstrated that Jesus' life and work did not fit into the traditional messianic definitions. That there is no clear indication that Jesus reinterpreted the traditional concepts' and that there is no record of Jesus himself having promised to return soon. Bultmann is therefore of the opinion that we can know very little about the historical Jesus. According to him, little as we know about the life and personality of Jesus Christ, we know enough of his message. Naturally this gives no proof that all the words attributed to him are actually his, for many sayings originated in the church and many others were modified by the church.

However, he accepted that the fact that Jesus lived and is the founder of Christianity is beyond doubt. This position, for those who are interested in the personality of Jesus, is depressing and destructive and for our purpose it has no significance (Bultmann 1958:12-14). Bultmann's theology does not convincingly account for the sudden appearance of the Easter faith of the disciples of Jesus, nor for the indisputable fact of the gospel tradition; that Jesus was put to death. This has led Bultmann's pupils and successors to reconsider the problem of the continuity between Jesus of Nazareth and the kerygmatic Christ. Without discarding what they learned from Bultmann, these scholars, although cautious, are moving towards accepting that Jesus regarded himself as the Messiah.

3.2 James Robinson's Theology

Robinson (1959) argues that the twentieth century is distinguished from the nineteenth century by a new understanding of history. The modern understanding of history is that historical scholarship cannot be dissociated from the beliefs, opinions and prejudices of the historian. This new understanding of history has profound implications for the

way in which we understand the relationship between the historical Jesus and the kerygmatic Christ. It suggests among other things, that the kerygma, in spite of its mythological form, is not mythological in its content, but rather its content is the meaningfulness of the life of a historical person. That is, the kergma invites us to understand the cross not as a natural occurrence, a brute fact, but as Jesus own existential understanding of his selfhood. The cross is thus Jesus' own act of accepting death and living out of transcendence, because it is only as such that a historical understanding of that event and the church's kergma converge.

Robinson, therefore want to affirm the continuity between historical Jesus and his appropriation of his existence on the one hand and the church's kerygma. He insists that the kerygma has not superimposed upon the life of Jesus a meaning alien to it. For that reason it is essential that the elaboration of the kerygma must be consonant with Jesus' own intention, commitment self-understanding and therefore with his own existential appropriation of his death. In other words, Robinson's thesis is that scholars must test and substantiate the fundamental agreement between the kerygma and Jesus' own self-understanding and his mission. This kind of test is possible, according to Robinson, because the Jesus of history is accessible to us not only in the kerygma but also independently via the medium of historiography.

In calling for such a test, Robinson's position parallels that of nineteenth-century scholarship in its understanding kerygma as the church's reproduction of its religions feeling of sonship in relation to God, as well as in its total dependence on historiography to make the Jesus accessible to believers.

3.3 Van Harvey and Ogden's Theology

Van Harvey and Ogden find Robinson's arguments unconvincing. Hence they questioned Robinson's assertion that a particular historical method can guarantee openness. They also wonder if whether the new quest, in contrast to the nineteenth century beliefs on Jesus, does not in fact obscure the difference between the person of the historian and his or her scholarly office, by blurring the difference between the act of reconstructing the past for his or her personal discipline. Harvey and Ogden argued that because historiography can reconstruct Jesus' selfhood and thus establish that the historical Jesus had a certain self-hood, this new historiography can in principle establish that Jesus did not have the selfhood the kerygma claims he had, thereby demonstrating that the kerygma is false. That is, if Jesus' selfhood as proclaimed, by the gospels does not correspond with the portrait reconstructed by the

historian, then we are faced with a choice between believing the kerygma or the historian.

4.0 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the criticism levelled by van Harvey and Ogden against Robinson does indicate that there is no unanimity among New Testament scholars on the problem of the relationship between the historical Jesus and the kerygmatic Christ. This is demonstrated by the fact that scholars are differently opined concerning the fact of historical Jesus.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have been able to examine the seeming problem of historical Jesus. Due to the availability of new historical facts, it become pertinent that theologians should seek for more corroborative evidences to substantiate the essence of the salvation work of Christ. This is to be done by examining the works of the previous nineteenth century theologians.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Is Jesus of Nazareth a real historical figure? Give evidence.
2. What culminated to the new search for historical Jesus?

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Simon, Maimela. (1990). *Modern Trends in Theology*. Braamfotien: Skotaville Publishers.

UNIT 4 LIMITATIONS TO SCIENCE

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The impressive achievements of scientific advancements in our recent history are something no one can shy away from. But such successes have led certain scientists to accept a triumphant stance, claiming their science to be the only sure route to knowledge and understanding. According to this view known as "*sciencetism*"– other modes of investigation (religion, for example) can be dismissed as unnecessary and irrelevant. Hence, this unit is intended to address this seeming problem and express the many areas of human life that science is incapacitated from investigating.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- list the limitation that science is faced with
- discuss the possible areas of interaction between religion and science
- highlight the need for caution from both science and religion
- relate the divergent views of both science and religion to achieve a common goal.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Limitations to Science

No one would have imagined a century ago that today we will be able to understand the molecule basis of heredity and know the genetic code. Given the great leaps science has been able to make in the past century, one might easily get the impression that it will find no limits in the future. This idea is wrong. As our understanding of

the universe develops, so does our understanding of the limits of what science will ever be able to do. I leave aside here, the question of whether science is reaching its limits. Scientific method itself has fundamental limits, and many important areas lie outside those limits. This we will examine briefly.

Aesthetics

George Ellis (2005) gave an illustration on the limited role of science in aesthetics, when he says, suppose he were to produce a device looking like a video recorder, which he calls aesthetic meter. Imagine he makes the claim that when the meter is pointed to a picture, it produces a score on the screen – 98 for Rein Brandt, 85 for a Van Gogh, 20 for a Jackson Pollock and soon telling you precisely how beautiful the picture is. Can such a claim be easily believed? Of course not. Beauty is not a quality science can deal with; no known experiment is able to measure beauty of a painting. That is not a scientific concept. The same holds for music, sculpture, poetry, literature, theatre, dance; the whole world of aesthetics is beyond the scope of science. But it is of great importance to human life. The same is true of ethics. Neither "good" nor "bad" is scientifically based scales like the Richter scale for earthquakes, for morality and so on. Any claim to measure good or bad by scientific experiment is false. Science cannot tell you what is morally valuable. It cannot say if saving gray squirrels or mink whales is an ethical act – for this also is not a scientific category. What science can do is tell you what environmental policies are likely to save them from extinction; but there is no way it can tell you whether it is either just good or bad to let arctic fisherman make a their living off seals and whales. That has to the determined on the basis of policy analysis informed by an ethical stance that comes from somewhere else – your religious beliefs, for instance. And the same limitation of science applies to many issues important to us. He how can one scientifically prove whether or not someone loves you.

Metaphysics

Another category which science cannot deals with is metaphysical issues. Underlying science is a series of such issues which cannot be probed by any scientific experiment. We know gravity exists, we can describe its effects, but we cannot tell how and why it works. How indeed does the Earth pull the moon, at that great distance? By a gravitational force? That is just a restating of the effect in new words, not an explanation in any fundamental sense. What is the reason that gravity holds matter under its spell and what enforces the rule that gravity is always attractive (unlike electromagnetism)? We

do not know – if we did, we would be close to inventing antigravity machine. What we can do is observe it in action and describe that action ever more accurately. We do not know how God or nature makes matter obey those rules. Science can tell you what the laws of physics are, but it cannot tell you why they exist. Science cannot tell you why the universe exists and above all it cannot tell you whether or not God exists.

These limitations cannot be changed by future advances in science; they are fundamental to its nature. So we can expect many major advances in science in the future – in terms of understanding the future of the universe, the course of evolutionary history, the way the brain functions, for example – but we cannot expects it to solve ethical or moral or metaphysical issues. Science forms a valuable part of human life, but it is not the basis for a whole human life, we shall always need to study and teach ethics, aesthetics and philosophy, as well as science and this should include comparatives religion for a holistic approach to human nature. Those who claims science can supplants all of these disciplines are not really facing all the facts.

3.2 Science and Religion: Converging Paths to Truth

Until recently, there was a popular notion that science was the only trust – worthy path to truth. Other sources of truth, especially religious beliefs, were said to be outmoded. Now the situation is very different. It is no longer science which many people look to for answers. Anxious of deeper meaning, many have turned to religious truths. (Robert Herman 2003). Part of the reasons for this change can be traced to the modern understanding of science itself which was viewed as a hand maiden of religion.

"The Probability Clouds"

The pioneers of Science adopted the attitude that God has given them a world to be understood and appreciated through science. The same way, the theologians understood and appreciate God through the study of the scriptures. But gradually, scientists began to believe that their methodology based upon reason and experimentally verifiable facts was sufficient in itself. The very success of science led to the gradual separation of science and religion. Then, at the beginning of the twentieth century, the pendulum began to swing back. Physicists discovered a basic limitation in the measurement of the particles making up atoms. The idea that electrons orbited the atomic nucleus like planets orbiting the sun was understood to be only a crude model. The orbits were replaced by smeared – out

"*probability clouds"* which specified only the probability of finding the electron in various locations. The upshot of this limitation of measurement was puzzling. Events studied with individual particles like electrons were unpredictable, yet the physical system, containing many such particles, behaved in a precise mathematical way. The reaction of some scientists was annoyance and disagreement. Albert Einstein's response was that "God does not play dice".

The Cosmology

Then cosmology revealed that the universe was bigger by many orders of magnitude than we had ever dreamed. And that it had come to be by way of a "big bang". A powerful explosion which seems to confirm the basic notion found in the first verses of Genesis that the universe originated at some point in the past, it had not always existed. On the biological side, the origin of life proved to be quite subtle. There seem to be a delicate and intricate balance in the structure of the cosmos necessary for the emergence of life. The conditions were so restricted as to be given a name-*the anthropomorphic principle*. If life came about by purely mechanistic means, then it was on the basis of a special set of circumstances.

The Human Brain

There were also some remarkable findings on the human brain. The combination of all the neutrons and the multitude of connections between neutrons make for a level of complexity that rivals the number of stars in the universe. In effect, there is a universe of complexity in our heads. Such complexity appears everywhere. As we probe more deeply into the universe, the more the mysteries multiply. The pursuit of science is like peeling an onion. Each layer removed reveals another layer, and another, and on and on.

The Myth of Experimental Data

In addition to this deepening complexity in the workings of science, there had also come a new understanding of the nature of scientific truth is arrived at without feeling or bias, based solely upon experimental data has been shown to be a myth. The philosopher of science, Michael Polawyi has shown that no truth is arrived at without the scientist assuming (or having faith in) a particular world view. Accordingly, even in science, there is no such thing as abstract knowledge; it is always knowledge held by someone as a commitment. So the faith component, so important to religion, has its counterpart in science.

Limits to Mathematical Description

Then, just as our ability to make measurements has built-in limits to the mathematical descriptions we provide in science. The famous theorem of Czech mathematician Kurt Gödel proved in 1931, stated that it is not possible to demonstrate that any mathematical system as both consistent and complete. There must exist true statements that cannot be proved within the system. The physicist Freeman Dyson of Princeton Institute for Advanced Study argues similarly that the laws of physics, having as they do a mathematical formulation, must also be inexhaustible.

The Scientists' World View

Finally, another critique of science was raised with the publication in 1970 of the historian Thomas Kahn's book, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions.* Kuhn described scientific progress as a series of alternating periods of normality, in which an accepted broad conceptual framework or "paradigm" was applied, and periods of revolution in which these paradigms were shattered and replaced by new ones. Social scientists picked up this idea, and some even went as far as to suggest that science was purely the product of complex social interactions, dependent upon the prevailing "world view" of the scientists involved. It was as though scientists just got together and agreed on a definition of truth, a sort of conspiracy.

The Option of Religion

With science on the defensive, people have begun to rethink the importance of religious faith as a valid source of truth and meaning. Indeed, some prominent scientists are even writing books about God. This is suggesting that many new discoveries in science take us well beyond scientific interpretation, reaching instead into the realm of religion. Many people would conclude that God has placed remarkable signs in the heavens, on earth and in us. Science, for decades standing aloof, now appears to be pointing to religious faith as an equally valid source of truth.

3.3Science/Religion Dialogue

Kitty Ferguson (2003) has asserted that science is not the atheistic super weapon that earlier generations thought it was. It doesn't rule out belief–even orthodox belief. Nevertheless, diehards continue to brandish this old weapon. Not that science has found an explanation

for the way the universe appears to be incredibly fine–tuned to produce life. This fine–tuning is taken by some to be evidence of a creative purpose at work. They may be right. If one wishes to argue for belief in God in a scientific intellectual discussion, don't be surprised if you lose. Few undergraduates have the knowledge and expertise- or the experience (living with the presence of God) to hold their own in such a debate. Don't worry. Whether there is a God and what God is like are not matters decided by any debate or argument, regardless of how well–informed and deeply thought out. Either there is a God, or there isn't. God is like what God is like.

God's Existence is not an Issue for Debate

Your eloquence on ineptitude won't make one jot of difference to the answer you can rack up debating points and still be wrong. You can be demolished and still be right. Science teaches you to live with unanswered questions and contradictions, sometimes to hold in mind two "truths" that on the face of it, can both be true. Putting a seeming contradiction "on hold" isn't double think when you do it knowingly; this is as true in religion as it is in science.

Learning from Others

Science builds on earlier knowledge. There have been great minds whose vision you should trust at least until you're sure of your own. Religion has people like that too; they have wrestled the same questions that disturb you. If you are prepared to trust Einstein until you are able to understand relativity for yourself, why not trust great spiritual leaders? Science calls for a child-like approach. So does religion. Child-like means putting no limit on the "possible" being full of wonder, questioning what others take for granted.

Experiencing God

It's right for you to strive for mature intellectual sophistication. But you should know that the great thirteenth century philosopher Thomas Aquinas spent a lifetime in intellectual pursuits, arguing powerfully for the existence of God, he would have the debate you lost. But later he had an experience of God, compared with which all earlier endeavour seemed to him "like mere straw". People still have that experience today.

Partners in Knowledge

I argued that a realistic understanding of both science and religion reveals areas of rich contact and even possible confirmation. A

critical and realistic view of science and religion reveals that they each in their separate domains and methods. And yet there also points of distinct contact and communication. Science asks questions of the physical world that can be answered by elegant instrumental measurements. This guides the clues and insights to be used in building our picture of the material universe. But the "what" and "how" queries often lead the investigator to the inevitable "why" question. This is the sphere of philosophy and religion.

4.0CONCLUSION

Albert Einstein, the greatest scientist of this century, wrote in 1942: *"religion without science is blind, science without religion is lame*" Some twenty years earlier, another great scientist, William Bragg, had said the following: "*Some times people ask if religion and science are not opposed to one another. They are; in the sense that the thumb and fingers of my hand are opposed to one another. It is an opposition by means of which anything can be grasped."* It is significant that when the British government recently established a committee to report on the ethics of cloning, they chose as Chairman John Polkinghone, distinguished high-energy physicist, who moved to theology and became an ordained priest. Perhaps, this is a herald for the twenty-first century.

5.0SUMMARY

In this study, we have been able to examine the limitations to science, the co-operative role that can be played by both science and religion; and finally the enhancement of more purposeful dialogue between both disciplines.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Explain two limitations of science?
2. What lessons have the undergraduate student to learn from this unit?
3. Why is metaphysics a difficult place for scientific investigation?

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Niebuhr, H. R. (1974). *Radical Monotheism and Western Culture.* New York: Harper.

Niebuhr, H. R. (1964). *Schleimacher on Christ and Religion.* New York: Scribner.

Weber, M. (1958). *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism.* New York: Scribner.

Welch, C. (1972). *Protestant Thought in the Nineteenth Century*. Vol. 1. New Harem: Yale University.

UNIT 5 RELIGION AND SOCIAL CHANGE

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we shall be focusing on the role of religion as an instrument of positive social change. It is an undeniable fact that scholars have (because of the passive role of religion in the past) labelled religion as an instrument of political and economic oppression. But some other scholars like Max Weber have also defended religion as an instrument of bringing about positive change in the society. Religion is not just the conservative force portrayed by Karl Marx. At some points in history, as Marx Weber explained, religion has promoted dramatic social transformation.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- explain the meaning of social change
- have a clear idea of history of social change in the church
- explain the origin and meaning of liberation theology
- discuss the different types of liberation theology.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Origin and Meaning of Social Change

Max Weber contended that new ideas are often the engines of change. It was the religious doctrine of Calvinism, for example that sparked the industrial revolution in Western Europe.

As he explains in detail, John Calvin (1509-1564) a leader in the protestant reformation preached the doctrine of predestination.

According to Calvin, an all-powerful and all- knowing God predestined some people for salvation and condemned most to eternal damnation with each individual's fate sealed even before birth, and known only to God, the only certainty is what hangs in the balance, eternal glory or hell fire.

Understandably, anxious about their fate, Calvinists sought signs of God's favour in this world and gradually came to regard prosperity as a sign of God's favour in this world and a sign of divine blessing. This conviction and a rigid sense of duty led Calvinists to work all the time, and many amassed great riches, but wealth was never to fuel self-indulgent spending or for sharing with the poor, whose plight Calvinists saw as a mark of God's rejection. As agents of God's work on earth, Calvinists believed that they best fulfilled their "calling" by reinvesting profits and reaping ever-greater success in the process. All the while, they were thrifty, and eagerly embrace technological advances that would enhance their efforts. Driven by religious motives, then, they laid the ground work for the rise of industrial capitalism. In time, the religious fervour that motivated early Calvinists evaporated, leaving a profane protestant 'work ethic." In this sense, concluded Weber, industrial capitalism amounts to a "disenchanted" religion. Weber's analysis clearly demonstrates the power of religious thinking to alter basic shape of society.

3.2 Origin of Liberation Theology

Liberation theology emanated from people who have become acutely aware of being oppressed and down trodden and who are no longer prepared to put up with this. Because it is recent, and shows a new outlook among the poor, some may be tempted to dismiss it as merely another form of political protest. This may be partly true. But it is important to realize that liberation theology has its roots in the history of the church and society. It is a genuinely spiritual phenomenon which has its origin in the inadequacy of the theology of earlier times. Liberation theology is directed against major social evils such as class, race and sex domination. One may be forced to ask why such protests as these are allowed in the church which was supposed to have been the herald of peace, reconciliation and fellowship among people. The Christian church has always been influenced by the changing nature of the society in which it finds itself. From the time of Constantine, the church allowed itself to be co-opted by the ruling class and as a result, its interests, hopes, struggles and ambition were aligned with those of particular sections of western society in the process, it became alienated from the common people, who were oppressed by rich and powerful nobles. The church and its theology tended to legitimize the social, political,

and economic interests of the powerful few at the expense of the oppressed majority. Western Christianity allowed itself to be dominated a European cultural self-understanding, so that by the time the churches of Western Europe came into contact with people in other parts of the world, the interests of the church were identified with the interests of the ruling class of the western world, and these ruling class were male and white.

The theological self-understanding of the Western world equated Christianity with western culture and regarded the culture of non-Christian nations as barbaric, inferior, or sometimes evil, but certainly in no case worthy of any serious attention. These nations were simply regarded as destined by God for domination and exploitation. This attitude became the justification for the many outrages and atrocities inflicted on the native inhabitants of colonized countries by their foreign conquerors. These atrocities were in Africa, Latin America, and Asia. Western Christians assumed that they were superior to non-Christians, whose skins happened to be a different colour from their own. From this attitude of religious superiority, it was only a short step to giving political, economic, and social privileges to "God's" people who happened to be white, so that it is not surprising that the plunder, exploitation and impoverishment of the colonized countries and the oppression of all people of colour in Africa, Latin America, and Asia caused few qualms in the Christian West.

As an expression of outrage and revolt against the social and economic deprivation of the oppressed and dominated groups, liberation theology cannot be seen simply as an ephemeral fashion of the twentieth century. The tradition of expressing revolt against religiously sanctioned social injustice has deep roots in the life of the church. It surfaced in the sixteen century in the person of Thomas Muntzer and continues up to the present century. The wide support received by Luther and other reformers were largely due to the oppressed seeing the new faith as a means of protest against the unjust social order from which they had become alienated.

Liberation theology follows in this tradition of championing the cause of the poor and oppressed, and tries to liberate the gospel itself from its capacity to the ideology of the ruling class, an ideology which distorts the gospel by turning it into a justification for oppression. Although the rise of contemporary liberation theology is related to the twentieth century struggle against colonialism and racial domination, we should try to understand liberation theology against the background of modern historical awareness of the causes of suffering and the way people react to them.

Suffering and oppression are not new in human history, they are as old as humanity itself in the way in which people interpret suffering and oppression, however, it has varied greatly in the course of history. In Western Europe, during the middle ages, a static view of history developed, in which the class structure was seen as ordained by God, and therefore fixed and unchangeable. The theological expression of this view of history held that the poor and oppressed should be resigned to their sufferings, because they would be rewarded in the life after death. Two things happened to change this view.

This first was the humanist which emerged at the Renaissance. The human race came to be seen as responsible for its own history and destiny. The liberalism of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries taught that men and women could be creative agents and subjects in history and society. The second factor in this change of outlook was Hegel's dialectic theory which Marx applied to matter and history. History was no longer seen as something static and unchanging, Marx's critical analysis of capitalist society, and his view of the role of labour in transforming the world, showed that there was a different way of understanding history. These also contributed to the rise of liberation theology which no longer saw God as the guarantor of a fixed social order in which one class of people enjoyed all the benefits and the rest were poor and oppressed. For liberation theology, history is changing unjust societies and unjust governments can be overthrown, and God is on the side of the poor and oppressed in their struggle for freedom.

The new view of history enabled people to have a better understanding of what action must be taken if oppressive social structures are to be transformed and a true and just society is to be established. It was thought that human decisions and actions could sharpen and change history, and Christians felt they were called by God to transform the world and to create just and humane society. The Christian socialist movement of the nineteenth century, under the leadership of Ritschl and Harnack on the European continent, F.D Maurice and Kingdey in England, and Bushnell and Ramschen Bush in America, should be understood against the background of this modern historical consciousness, which inspired Christians to work towards the transformation of society as an alternative to Marxist class struggle.

The role of the church in social change is not simply calling for an improvement in the living condition of the oppressed, but for the end of the oppression itself. Society should be organized in such a way that all people should be able to take part in determining for future

shape of their society. Liberation theologians believe that if people are truly to be free, they should be able to take power into their own hands to shape their own future and create their own history, and this entails a struggle against all the forces of oppression in human society. If analysis of the causes of oppression and exploitation shows that human beings have created the oppressive and exploitation structures of society, then human action is needed to bring about changes. This modem historical consciousness has made people aware that the living conditions of the poor and underdogs are intolerable and that political power should not be vested in the hands of the elite while the majority of the people are precluded from participating in the political decisions that shape their lives.

People are oppressed and suffer because their lives are controlled by others; they are dependent on the ruling classes culturally, politically, and economically. In this situation, people have become aware that they are not poor by accident or because they are lazy but because their oppressors deny them a voice in the shaping of society. Society has been shaped by the ruling classes, and the political and economical power structures ensure that the poor will remain impoverished, enslaved and controlled. When people reflect critically on their poverty and oppression they begin to think of action they can take to change the conditions under which they live so as to overcome their human-made poverty and deprivation. The efforts of the churches as instrument of social change should therefore be understood against this broad historical background in which people have come to realize that a great deal of poverty and suffering is not accidental, but caused by man-made social and economic structures. The aim of social change activities in the church is to make Christians aware of this situation, and to encourage oppressed groups in their struggle for freedom. It is not concerned so much with improving the living conditions of the poor, as with radically transforming social structures so as to get rid of all oppression. There is a danger of always misunderstanding the aims and origins of this in the church. Some people think of it as nothing more than the political, economic revolution of any groups with a few theological phrases thrown in to make it sound respectable.

4.0CONCLUSION

The role of the church in creating a just and free social order cannot be underestimated. As an organized institution of faith, it becomes a ready ground for the dissemination of liberation theology which can achieve socio- political freedom. Rather than been always seen as an instrument of social cohesion, the church can and has brought about meaningful social changes to various human societies.

5.0SUMMARY

In this unit, we have been able to look at the origin and meaning of social change in its relation to the church. Also, the origin and role of liberation theology in bringing about the much desired social change and freedom to people in oppressive societies was also examined.

6.0TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. What role did Christians play in the struggle for the abolishment of slave trade in the nineteenth century?
2. Is this role still relevant in today's society?

7.0REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Simon, Maimela. (1990). *Modern Trends in Theology*. Braamfotien: Skotaville Publishers.